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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

PEDAGOGY FOR POSTMODERNITY:
Travels in Poststructuralism, Feminism, and Education

by

Kelly Murphy ©

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE
STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Education

IN

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"TO BE ENTANGLED IN HUNDREDS OF PAGES OF A WRITING
SIMULTANEOUSLY INSISTENT AND ELLIPTICAL, IMPRINTING
EVEN ITS ERASURES, CARRYING OFF EACH CONCEPT INTO AN
INTERMINABLE CHAIN OF DIFFERENCES, SURROUNDING OR
CONFUSING ITSELF WITH SO MANY PRECAUTIONS,
REFERENCES, NOTES, CITATIONS, COLLAGES, SUPPLEMENTS --
THIS 'MEANING-TO-SAY-NOTHING' IS NOT, YOU WILL AGREE,
THE MOST ASSURED OF EXERCISES."
- J. DERRIDA 1981.

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis titled PEDAGOGY FOR POSTMODERNITY: TRAVELS IN POSTSTRUCTURALISM, FEMINISM AND EDUCATION submitted by KELLY MURPHY in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

....
Dr. M. I. Assheton-Smith

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Dr. R. A. Morrow

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Dr. D. Shogan

DATE August 11/93

This defence of the interruption is dedicated to my parents, with love and amusement.

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the proposed conciliation between postmodernism and the discourse of critical pedagogy, specifically as it has been articulated by education theorist Henry Giroux. The author argues that the self-reflexivity required by postmodernism has been approached inconsistently within critical pedagogy. It is argued that a similar tension is visible in contemporary feminist encounters with postmodern philosophy. The thesis takes the form of a comparative analysis of the disjuncture in both political arenas. Chapter One provides an overview of postmodern and poststructuralist theories, highlighting the work of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Chapter Two examines feminist responses to the poststructuralist concept of the 'death of the subject', focussing on arguments raised by Nancy Hartsock, Judith Butler, and Jane Flax. Chapter Three considers Giroux's proposal for a 'border pedagogy of postmodern resistance'. The questions of postmodern curricula and the authority of 'teacher-intellectuals' are discussed in view of Foucault and Flax. Chapter Four recommends the work of feminist poststructuralist theorists of pedagogy as a potential solution. This chapter consists of a stylized deconstruction of an essay by Nicholas Burbules and Suzanne Rice.

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INTRODUCTION

Texts are sites of pedagogical and political struggle.
- Henry Giroux, 1990.

It is an important time to be doing social inquiry. Insights from postmodernist philosophy have more than simply extended the boundaries of political theory and social science research -- they have lead to a radical requestioning of the concepts altogether. Out of what is being called 'cultural studies', and drawing from film studies, linguistics, psychoanalysis, comparative literature and other areas, a 'tapestry' (Fraser and Nicholson 1988: 104) is being woven of new methods for approaching social critique. These hybrid perspectives, or what Clifford Geertz deems 'blurred genres' (1986: 514), are defining the stakes in what has been considered "a new politics in a society in which the struggle over ... language and the practices of forming discourse becomes the major locus of social life" (Wexler 1987: 134).

All this holds great import for the the institution of public schooling and the aims of 'emancipatory' or 'empowering' education. Education's intimate connection to the "conditions and means through which knowledge is produced" (Lather 1991b: 15) positions it at the heart of postmodern reconsiderations of knowledge, legitimacy, and power. Paul Smith, for example, reads Jameson's arguments for postmodernism as "champion(ing) an alternative 'aesthetic of cognitive mapping' -- a pedagogical culture that seeks to endow the individual subject with some new heightened sense of its place in the global system" (1989: 140).

Accordingly, 'postmodernism' has been taken up as a major issue in contemporary educational theory and research. Critical pedagogy theorist Henry Giroux speaks of pedagogy as a form of 'cultural production' (1993); "a configuration of textual, verbal, and visual practices that seek to engage the processes through which people understand themselves and the ways in which they engage others and their environment" (1991a: 120). More specific in his reference to the postmodern commodification of signs, Roger Simon (1992) points to pedagogical work as a form of *semiotic* production, implicated as such in the formation and regulation of meaning and imagination. Simon observes,

> as educators, our work is explicitly located within the realm of semiotic production. Our attempts to engage students are constructed within specific modes that we hope will provoke particular forms of communciation, comprehension, and interest. How we provoke this engagement, within which productive regimes and with what corresponding strategies and questions, defines much of our pedagogical practice (1992: 37).

This textual adoption of 'postmodern' conceptual categories, and, as I will indicate, postmodern rhetorical devices, appear to situate these theories of critical education within the 'new' philosophies. I will argue, however, that foundational distinctions inhere between the goals of pedagogy ('critical' or not) and the assumptions of postmodernism which render any type of serious conciliation between the two an extremely tenuous proposition. My intention, then, is to signal a precautionary note against an overenthusiastic conjoining of political discourses which, in their present formulations, may be incommensurable.

In all its permutations, the underlying premises of formal Western education locate this institution squarely in the lap of the Enlightenment. As Jane Flax notes of Jean-François Lyotard's analysis of the Enlightenment 'metanarrative',

> the spread of new domains of knowledge to the population is the means of winning freedom and progress for the people and the nation a a whole. Only an enlightened people can create and sustain an enlightened state. "The connection of knowledge, legitimacy and power give rise both to an idea of a socially useful but neutral [universal] knowledge and to the creation of agencies and professions whose task is to spread and apply this knowledge throughout the population, thus further emancipating it" (Flax 1990: 202-203).

The metaphorical import of the Enlightenment is bolstered by the idiom of education. I think back upon the motto of my public high school, engraved on stone in the longest living 'dead' language known to the West: *alere flammam:* 'to feed the flame'. Regardless of the conservative, liberal, or even 'radical' political slant of its executioners, the task of education remains that of leading ('ducare') the 'ignorant' out of darkness by the flaming light which emanates from the lamp of learning. Jennifer Gore points to the same dilemma:

> all of the strands of radical pedagogy share connection to what is known as "the Enlightenment", or "modernity," and consequently maintain notion of progress within an "onward and upward" view of the world in which change and improvement, freedom and autonomy, are not only favored, but expected ... . Put simply, no matter what one's political position, it is difficult to conceptualize educating others without also adhering to a certain conception of change or progress (1993: 121 - 122).

The question that I pose, then, is straightforward if not easily resolvable: can we adequately, that is, honestly, engage with the challenges postmodern theory directs toward the Enlightenment while at the same time retaining, in whatever modified and critical form, a commitment to 'feed the flame'?

In what follows I suggest that we *can*, but not within critical pedagogy as it is currently understood and currently implemented. The postmodern 'end of innocence' (Flax 1992) denies political activists the convenience of justifying and legitimating claims to moral authority through an appeal to rational truth. What this requires of critical educators is a disposition toward self-critique in the pedagogical actions they take on behalf of 'democracy' and 'emancipation'. I will argue for the development of a critical pedagogical practice which advances its call for transformative politics, while simultaneously interrupting its own actions as gestures of potential infringement, invasion and imposition. This self-reflexive articulation is paradigmatic of what Linda Hutcheon (1989) describes as the quintessentially postmodern political stance: the 'complicitous critique'. Similarly, Charles Jencks describes the 'postmodern agenda' as a strategy of 'double-coding'; "of affirming and denying the existing power structures at the same time" (1992: 13). It is my position that, although critical pedagogy appears to address this reflexive requirement for 'double-coding' and interruption *in principle*, in practical terms its application has been theorized inconsistently.

My discussion begins with the premise that the tension over reflexivity in critical education is also visible in contemporary feminist political debates over postmodernism. An analysis of the insights garnered from feminist discourses should therefore assist in bringing the pivotal questions for education into focus. With this in mind, I have divided the text into three sections, entitled, 'Philosophy'; 'Politics'; and 'Praxis'. Section A, 'Philosophy', provides an overview of the conceptions and implications of the term 'postmodernity' as I understand it at this juncture. The range and scope of philosophical questions raised by the rubric of 'postmodernism' are as extensive as those included under the concept of 'modernism' itself. My intention is neither to develop a precise definition of postmodernism nor to valorize one critical interpretation over others. Rather I attempt strictly to highlight those issues that will pertain in my later analyses of feminism and pedagogy.

Postmodernism may be said to inherit its philosophical disillusionment from two distinct but related forms of French poststructuralist analysis identifiable most readily with the work of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. I continue my discussion by outlining the general arguments posed by these theorists. An examination of Foucault's work is particularly important for drawing the theoretical measure by which I will evaluate 'postmodern education'. Derrida's influence comes to light most clearly in Chapter Four, where his method of textual 'deconstruction' guides the direction of my discussion.

Section B, 'Politics', consists of chapters Two and Three. Here I evaluate some of the differing responses to what postmodern theory implies for *political action*.

Chapter Two sets out the issues as they have been raised within feminist politics. I compare the approaches of Nancy Hartsock, Judith Butler, and Jane Flax, which I view, respectively, as the rejection, the 'embrace', and finally, the qualified acceptance of the postmodern perspective that emphasizes the tentative character of its commitments, both to feminism and to postmodernism. An analysis of these three perspectives should therefore provide a reasonable indication of the paramaters of the debate. In the wake of deconstruction, an appraisal of postmodernism that moves beyond binaristic forms of reaction is the type that I would wish to privilege. To my mind, Flax's approach therefore appears as the optimal perspective of the three.

Having assessed the dimensions of the postmodern problematic for feminism, I turn in Chapter Three to consider the context of critical pedagogy. I focus specifically on the work of Henry Giroux, drawing out the implications of his project for a 'border pedagogy of postmodern resistance' (1990). Following his own call for 'border-crossings' (1993), Giroux's work reflects a rigorous engagement with postmodern cultural theories in a wide range of discourses and academic disciplines. By bringing this awareness to bear on questions of pedagogical purposes and ethics, Giroux establishes, both in explicit and implicit terms, the core set of questions that need to be addressed.

Giroux's centrality in North America as the 'voice' of resistance education, or 'critical pedagogy', has become a point of friction within education circles. My positive response in Chapter One to the poststructuralist displacement of the 'author-function' (Foucault 1986) as the origin of particular discourses, makes this focus on Giroux appear as something of an about face. Nevertheless, I believe there are important gains to be made by taking up the issues raised in and by Giroux's work. Generally speaking, it is important to recognize that Giroux's place in critical pedagogy is unlikely to be affected nor will the discourse be strengthened by ignoring the significant contributions he has made to educational theory. Moreover, unlike the goal of modernist revolutionary movements, the strategic motivation behind the poststructuralist gesture of deconstruction is not to replace the current authority with something or someone new, but to indicate the arbitrary status of the category itself. With this in mind, it would be inappropriate for me to attempt to substitute some other theorist or group of theorists in the privileged location which Giroux seems to occupy.

A more useful approach, and one that takes the political implications of poststructuralism seriously, would operate *both* by engaging critically with Giroux's texts *and,* additionally, creating spaces for the voices of others. This double-coded response works to expand rather than cordon off the possiblities for the development of the discourse. As Roger Simon notes,

> the idiom of possibility stands empty. Accused of meaningless rhetoric, it can only be rescued from the dismissal of convention and cynicism by devleoping its substance, sketching both its form and therefore its limits. This is not a task to be completed by one person. As I attempt to clarify for myself the question of what might be an adequate notion of education ... I am at the same time seeking to join with others in what must be a collective and democratic venture (1992: 13).

By dealing in Chapter Three with Giroux's texts and then turning in Chapter Four to consider alternative formulations of critical pedagogy, I hope to make some contribution to this large task of reorganizing the language and the possibilities of radical education.

Section C, 'Praxis', attempts to bring the issues of postmodern theory, feminist politics and pedagogical practice together. My discussion takes the form of a stylized 'deconstruction' of an essay written by Nicholas Burbules and Suzanne Rice (1991). Patti Lather notes that a deconstructive reading of critical pedagogy would "look at both the production and investment of desire on the part of the 'liberatory pedagogue' and the taboos, the lacunae of critical theory" (1991b: 139). With this in mind, I propose to read Burbules and Rice's defence of Giroux's 'postmodern education' deconstructively, and to ask what the text does not or cannot ask of itself. By 'denaturalizing' some of the assumptions that have been made in the name of postmodern education, it may possible to move toward the construction of a new, 'truly' postmodern, 'truly' emancipatory pedagogical praxis.

PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER ONE

READING THE LANDSCAPE: A VIEW OF 'POSTMODERNISM'

No neat integration, new synthesis, or Aufhebung ...
-- Jane Flax, 1990.

My purpose in this chapter is to fashion a type of introductory legend by which it might be possible to read the social and political 'maps' that have been drawn from the rubric named 'postmodernism'. Specifically, I will highlight the sets of terms and perspectives deriving out of the postmodern theoretical approaches that will have relevance in my later chapters. I begin with a brief outline of the historical and philosophical events that have resulted in the entry of this term into our vocabulary. I continue by pointing to the representational crisis, or 'linguistic turn' which postmodern is said to condition. I then locate postmodernism with respect to French poststructuralist conceptions of power, subjectivity, and truth. The remainder of the chapter focuses on the questions raised in and through the poststructuralist theories of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. It is in the context of their work, I suggest, that the most crucial problems come to light regarding the relationships between postmodernism, feminism, and critical pedagogy.

The extensive, difficult work of Derrida and Foucault individually has provided critics with ample material for the production of hundreds of books, articles and, of course, theses. It would be impossible for me, in this short space, to cover all of these arguments. I have therefore tailored my discussion to set up what I view as the most salient issues for feminism and for pedagogy. My greatest editorial contrivance has been to construct an arbitrary form/content distinction between Derrida and Foucault. While Derrida's theoretical positions have been the topic of intense debate, I concentrate here on an investigation of his analytical *method*. In the case of Foucault, I do the reverse, calling attention to the theoretical markers, conceptions, and arguments that have come out of his work, generally to the neglect of his approach to subject matter in his 'empirical' studies.

SPEAKING POSTMODERN

The vast and proliferating body of definitions and redefinitions of the term 'postmodernism' renders thankless the task of summarizing its concepts.[1] I begin with the caveat, then, that the present excursion reflects only a sample, not a synopsis, of possible approaches to the postmodern landscape.[2] Significantly, I omit discussion of forms of postmodern analysis which have emerged in aesthetic spheres.[3] This absence makes sense, given that I will eventually attempt to address the relationship between 'postmodernism' and political (feminism) and social scientific (sociology of education) arenas. I draw attention to it here, however, as a way of introducing the first theoretical 'principle' which postmodern conceptual categories have developed.[4]

Postmodernism points to a 'loss of stable meaning' in contemporary Western society, as electronic forms of communication blur and finally explode the distinction between what is 'real' and what is (simply) 'simulation'. For postmodern theorists, this technological unfolding, coupled with a philosophical reassessment of the relations between 'truth' and 'fiction' mark a 'crisis of representation' for our visual and verbal competencies. Thus a 'truly' postmodernist analyst refuses to draw a line between the parameters of art and the parameters of (political) science. Closely tied to this refusal is the second 'quasi-principle' of postmodern theory; namely, a disruption of the pride of place assigned to scientific rationality as the only valid means for gaining access to 'truth', and, moreover, a repudiation of all unidimensional explanations of social history. The third significant 'principle' of postmodernism incorporates the above precepts in marking a breakdown between 'high' and 'low' culture.

---

[1] It may be that the exemplary instance of Baudrillard's 'society of simulations' (1983) is provided in the recent spate of publications produced by North American academics, eager to add their exegetical grist to the postmodern mill.

[2] This caveat itself could be read as a postmodern gesture, by avoiding the 'will to totalization'.

[3] See, for example, Arac (1987); Hassan (1987); Hutcheon (1988, 1989); Jameson (1991); and Jencks (1992).

[4] As it will be seen, one of the aims of postmodernist theory is to do away with the concept of 'first principles' altogether. I mark off the term with quotation marks, therefore, to emphasize the tension that is produced when discussing the foundations of anti-foundationist criticism.

Theorists analyzing the terrain of contemporary social history attribute these major transformations in Western philosophy and global cultural relations to three specific trends or impulses. Combined, these impulses have produced what can be referred to as the 'postmodern scene'. One is the movement toward a 'late' or 'third' (Jameson 1988, 1991) stage of capitalist development, within which, as Frederic Jameson notes, all precapitalist enclaves have "systematically been penetrated, commodified, and assimilated to the dynamics of the system" (1988: 12). David Harvey (1989) explains the global penetration of capitalism in terms of its 'post-Fordist' system of production: a shift from Fordist assembly line production models to "flexible accumulation, including geographical dispersal to zones of easier labor control and a consequent new international division of labour" (Lather 1991b: 32). The completed 'cannibalization' of non-capitalist enclaves is understood to precipitate a final and violent inward turn of the capitalist thrust upon its point of departure: the West. As Jameson suggests, "in a way, we (the United States) have become the biggest third-world country, because of unemployment, nonproduction, the flight of factories, and so on. If the third world is defined, as it sometimes has been, as the 'development of underdevelopment', it does seem clear that we have begun to do this to ourselves as well" (1988: 17).

Closely connected to the analysis of 'late capitalism' is the pronouncement of the present era as the 'age of information', or, 'the age of communications'. Explosive developments in electronic media and computer technology have expanded capitalist commodification not only geographically, but into spheres of symbolic social interaction as well. In the contemporary era the 'sign' itself -- in all its textual, visual, linguistic and bodily variations -- has been transformed into a commodity produced for sale (Baudrillard 1983). As Wexler indicates, "the commodity fetishism of labor in production is complemented by the commodity fetishism of the sign in consumption" (1987: 148).

The third and 'other' influence is reflected in the emergence of 'post-colonial' challenges to Western domination. The global dispersal of media technology has provided previously 'silenced' voices with new access to powerful modes of communication. The expression of these voices and their 'suppressed' knowledges have fundamentally undermined the credibility of Western philosophy's 'neutral' reason by revealing its partiality -- in both senses of incompleteness and bias. Jane Flax observes,

> a major factor contributing to the philosopher's displacement or crisis of confidence is the revolt of the others against any unifying authoritative voice. The voices of the others include nonphilosophical modes of formal knowledge. Equally important are what Foucault calls the "subjugated discourses". Among these are the voices of women and people of colour throughout the world. These voices have enunciated a 'great refusal' on a scale not even Marcuse dared to dream (1990: 191).

Profound disillusionment and scepticism toward traditional Western truth claims and a disbelief in the reliability of our established systems of thought for understanding anything about the world are some of the cultural responses to the commodification of communication and the undeniable presence of these 'subjugated' knowledges. Mark Poster draws the point succinctly:

> in a world where Reagan's television persona gets him elected to the presidency, where the Soviets self-consciously rewrite their history, where commodities generate their demand and their use value through the signs they bear -- in this postmodern world the line between worlds and things, subjects and object, inside and outside, humanity and nature, idea and matter becomes blurred and indistinct and a new configuration of the relation of action and language is set in place (1989: 10).

The Enlightenment account of the advance of modern reason and science, Christianity's story of man's journey toward salvation, Freud's psychoanalytic explanation of the development of human consciousness, and not least, the Marxian theory of class conflicts directed toward the proletariat's coming-to-consciousness and the onset of communism, have each been shown to organize themselves around the systematic exclusion of those who do not fulfill their white, European, middle-class, heterosexual, and male standards for rational subjectivity. Thus, following Jean-François Lyotard (1984), who under different circumstances might well be regarded as the 'grand master' of the postmodern critique, postmodernism, above all, is designated as a repudiation of these totalizing 'metanarratives', with their overarching ideal of unarrested 'progress' and their presumptions to objectivity, or what Haraway (1990) calls 'the view from nowhere'. Effectively, what is 'postmodern', then, is a repudiation *of* the 'above all'. Henry Giroux's summation of this postmodern condition is worth repeating:

> [we live in a] period torn between the ravages and benefits of modernism; it is an age in which the notions of science, technology, reason are associated not only with social progress but also with the organization of Auschwitz and the scientific creativity that made Hiroshima possible [Poster 1989]. It is a time in which the humanist subject seems to no longer be in control of his or her fate. It is an age in which the grand narratives of emancipation, whether from the political Right or Left, appear to share an affinity for terror and oppression. It is

> also a historical moment in which culture is no longer seen as a reserve of white men whose contributions to the arts, literature, and science constitute the domain of high culture. We live at a time in which a strong challenge is being waged against a modernist discourse in which knowledge is legitimized almost exclusively from a European model of culture and civilization (1991c: 2).

GESTURES OF DISPLACEMENT

Considering these aspects of the 'postmodern sensibility', Jameson has observed that, "all in all, these developments have to be confronted as a historical situation rather than as something to be morally deplored or simply celebrated" (in Stephanson 1988: 12). To be confronted, however, postmodernity -- scene and sensibility -- appears to require a different language and a different set of conceptual categories. What has been called postmodernism's 'linguistic turn' (Rorty 1979) signals the difficult task of quite literally coming to terms with such transformation. Possessed of only the modernist conceptual grammar which postmodernism seeks to subvert, the task of theorizing social change, let alone putting it into practice poses a profound challenge. Marx himself was well aware that "the working class cannot simply lay hold on the ready-made state machinery and wield it for their own purpose" (1871: 533; 1989: 147). Where the 'master's tools' comprise our forms of knowledge and language itself, those who would seek change are seemingly obliged to think the unthinkable and to speak the unspeakable.

As we draw near to the end of the twentieth century and specifically situated social crises give way to the more basic issue of preserving life on the planet, this problem of articulating alternatives, of positing an 'other' to the way we lead our lives, presents itself as one of the most critical questions humanity has had to confront. As Jameson indicates, "a whole new theoretical problem is posed. What we need is a new vocabulary. The languages that have been useful in talking about culture and politics in the past don't really seem adequate to this historical moment" (1988: 12-13).

Poststructuralist theories of language and subjectivity suggest strategies for moving beyond the impasse. The geneological relationship between postmodernism and poststructuralism remains disputable. For my purposes here, and at the risk not only of reducing the complexities of the problem, but also of taking a step profoundly antagonistic to the tenets of postmodernism, I propose to 'translate' both concepts into a modernist lexicon. Doing so, we might consider postmodernism as describing the raw material of our existence (the metatheoretical landscape), setting the ontological and epistemological framework, and poststructuralist theories as suggesting possible things to do/ways of thinking about/within it.

Broadly stated, the poststructuralists have influenced postmodernism's rejection of three major Western metaphysical precepts. First, the poststructuralist critique throws into doubt the assumption that language offers a transparent medium for representing an external and objective reality (as well as questioning the grounds for assuming that such a reality is actually 'out there', awaiting representation). Second, it seeks to undermine the privileged status of reason and logic as the only legitimate means of gaining access to the 'Truth' about that reality. The third postulate poststructuralism targets is the conception of a constant, autonomous, rational, and individual subject of history.

Postmodern theorists have mobilized these perspectives to develop a number of possible gestures for displacing the metanarrative and its totalizing 'will to truth'. I read these gestures as falling into two, sometimes overlapping, categories which I have labelled 'incorporative opposition' and 'deconstruction'. 'Incorporative opposition' aims to decenter the authority of metanarratives by making visible a proliferation of possible alternative perspectives or 'ways of being'. Just as an increase to the number of variables destabilizes the set, recognition of the 'other' is expected to knock the central discourse out of place. Herein lies the apparent threat of relativism which prompted Jurgen Habermas's (1981) now-famous critique.[5] Ostensibly, "in the pluralistic world of postmodernity, every form of life is permitted on principle; or, rather, no agreed principles are evident which may render any form of life impermissable" (Bauman 1988/89: 40). According to this variant of the postmodern sensibility, as Charles Jencks observes, the aim is not for an integrated culture, but rather that "different ways of life can be confronted, enjoyed, juxtaposed, represented, and dramatised, so that different cultures acknowledge each's legitimacy" (1992: 13).

Within the category of 'incorporative opposition', I would locate Lyotard's (1984) anti-consensual defence of the 'differend',[6] as well as his call for 'language games' and a plurality of 'mininarratives'; i.e., accounts of human experiences that emphasize the local, discrete, and concrete circumstances of individuals and groups allied on the basis of similar positions within the social structure. Kroker and Cook's (1987) hedonistic, 'panic' implosions, and Baudrillard's (1983, 1990) 'simulacra' also fall into this category. More soberly, Jameson (1991), too, points to a form of 'channel-switching' in which a postmodern proliferation of codes and 'transcodings' might transpire.

The 'deconstructive' move follows a different logic. Rather than shifting the metanarrative out of its central position through the introduction of competing discourses, deconstruction proceeds by critically undermining the category of centrality altogether. By exposing within metanarrative claims to autonomy a contradictory reliance upon precisely those 'false' epistemological elements which they understand themselves to eschew, the deconstructive gesture unravels the notion of 'centrality' as ultimately 'undecidable'. The drawback of such an approach, more than anything else, is its indeterminacy. "Trapped in the abyss of binary oppositions" (Poster 1989: 26), the deconstructive theorist is bereft of any feasible means of proposing a positive social alternative.

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[5] The postmodern anti-critique of the question of relativism usually returns to the notion of 'binary oppositions', which I will discuss below. In brief, the concept of 'relativism' only takes on meaning, it is argued, with respect to its opposite, namely, 'universalism'. Because it refuses binaristic categorizations altogether, postmodern theory does not 'celebrate' relativism, but makes it a non-issue. See Lather's discussion (1990: 114-117), "Just say No to nihilism: relativism as a God trick", for an overview of the debate. See also Harding (1987), and Flax (1992).

[6] 'Differend', in the French, indicates differing perspectives or opinions.

This may account for the apoliticism, indeed the conservatism, of the bulk of North American advocates of the deconstructive approach. Most are located within Departments of Literature at American universities and devote themselves to the isolated deconstruction of literary works as a new form of textual interpretation. Among these, the 'Yale School' critics -- Bloom, Culler, Hartman, and Miller -- may be most renowned. Those *political* theorists who have taken up the deconstructive gesture appear, ironically, to be mostly feminists.[7] Among these, Scott's (1988) discussion of equality-versus-difference, and Poovey's (1988) reconceptualization of the feminist subject provide some notable examples.

In order to more fully understand the implications of these postmodern applications, it is worthwhile taking a closer look at the poststructuralist theories that have inspired them. The work of French philosopher Jacques Derrida and the late French social historian Michel Foucault represent the two most significant variants of the poststructuralist critique. Their respective approaches to social analysis have in large part informed the postmodern gestures of 'deconstruction' and 'incorporative opposition'. Derrida's approach, in similar fashion to Adorno's (1973) 'immanent critique', challenges the authoritative posture of textual arguments by exposing their internal incoherence and contradiction. Foucault's historical method seeks to uncover

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[7] Irony which should become apparent below in my discussion of Derrida, and in Chapter Two.

'subjugated knowledges' whose articulation may challenge the centrality of dominant discourses.

Derrida and Foucault are distinguishable from the postmodernists, however, in three important aspects. First, unlike many postmodern theorists, neither views the present disillusionment with the metanarrative as the result of contemporary technological developments. Contemporary scepticism is understood, rather, as the inevitable result of an epistemological contradiction that has been with us since the dawn of the Enlightenment but which we have only now begun to confront. For the poststructuralists, as Poster observes, "the problem is not that reason has 'turned into' domination but that all discourses are always already implicated in power. The problem is not that an absolute ground has been swept out from under us by certain historical events but that such grounds are the source of the theoretical problem in the first place" (1989: 26).[8]

Second, and as I will discuss for the case of Foucault in chapters Two and Three, neither theorist particularly recommends utilizing their displacement strategies to organize political intervention or attempts such mobilization himself. The third feature which distinguishes Derrida and Foucault from certain postmodernist variants is their dialectical approach to displacement. I suggest that both mobilize *each* of the two gestures of 'deconstruction' and 'incorporative opposition', and moreover, that they recognize the structural dangers inherent in privileging one strategy at the expense of the other. In the postmodern displacements indicated above, this dialectical approach has often been overlooked. As a result, the incorporative strategies can be seen as unreflexive replacements of one dominant discourse with one or more others, without dismantling the structure of domination itself. By the same token, and as I have noted, the strictly deconstructive approach appears to offer little in the way of a positive program, thus remaining stranded in an in(de)terminable critique.

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[8] See also Hoy (1989: 49). Speaking similarly, on the question of subjectivity, Judith Butler reflects, "there is a difference between positions of poststructuralism which claim that the [Enlightenment] subject *never* existed, and postmodern positions which claim that the subject *once* had integrity, but no longer does" (1992: 14). I consider the issue of the 'death of the subject' and its ramifications below and in Chapter Two.

INHERITANCES

What links Derrida and Foucault's poststructuralist perspectives is a rejection of Western humanism and its predilection toward a unified, rational, fully conscious subject who is the origin and author of 'his' meanings and the owner of 'his' speech acts. Poststructuralist theorists argue that this Cartesian subject is 'dead,' or rather, that it can be shown to have never been born. Repudiating the ideas of transparent language, the meaningfulness of experience, and the coherent, rational, and self-possessed subject, the poststructuralists posit instead a 'decentered' and 'fragmented' subject whose intentions, and the meanings she or he attaches to experiences are produced according to existing grammatical laws and vary with historical and social contexts. In these assumptions poststructuralism reveals its anti-humanist, structuralist roots.

For its primary analytical concepts, poststructuralism accepts from Saussurean structuralist linguistics the significance of 'binary oppositions' as the building-blocks of meaning-production; from Lacanian structuralist psychoanalysis, an awareness of the subjugation of consciousness to linguistic formations, and from Althusserian structuralist Marxism, the notion of ideological 'interpellation'. Poststructuralists make their break with structuralist social analysis, however, in denying the determining role, as Althusser (1971) puts it, "in the last instance" of an underlying level of primary meaning or truth. This primary truth, or 'transcendental signified,' is theorized variously by structuralism as located in speech -- as opposed to writing; the phallus -- as opposed to the penis; or the economic sphere -- as opposed to culture/politics.[9].

For poststructuralist theorists, the idea of the 'transcendental signified' reveals an adherence to a 'metaphysics of presence' that is logically inconsistent with the scientism of structuralist paradigms, thus the structuralist argument is said to 'deconstruct' (Derrida 1976). According to poststructuralist tenets, 'truth' should be seen only as a contextual and linguistic effect of constantly shifting 'power/knowledge' structures, and is better understood as a question of 'legitimacy': what we are capable of saying within a specified context (Foucault 1978, 1980). From a poststructuralist perspective, then, all meaning and all subjectivities are always constructed and 'in process', [10] changing with the context and the linguistic structures available. Jane Flax writes,

> language speaks us as much as we speak it. Furthermore the meaning of our experience and our understanding of it cannot be independent of the fact that such experience and thought about it are grasped and expressed in and through language. To the degree that thought depends upon and is articulated (to ourselves and others) in language, thought and the 'mind' itself will be socially and historically constituted. No ahistorical or transcendental standpoint exists from and by which the Real can be directly and without construction/distortion apprehended and reported in or by thought (1992: 453).

Likewise, Bronwyn Davies observes, "our way of being at any one point in time will depend on the subject-positioning made possible by the discursive practices in which we participate" (1989: 5). Once we 'denaturalize' the socially constructed nature of discourse, the potential may be created for resistance groups to refuse the oppressed subject-positions they have been assigned through the dominant discourse and the legitimacy of authority is thrown radically into question.

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[9] In an interview with Julia Kristeva, Derrida summarizes the notion of the 'transcendental signified' as "a concept signified in and of itself, a concept simply present for thought, independent of a relationship to language, that is, of a relationship to a system of signifiers"(1981: 19).

[10] Kristeva's (1986) expression loses meaning in translation from the French, where 'le sujet en proces' signifies, as well, 'the subject on legal trial'.

Derrida and Foucault both warn, however, that the untenable quality of truth resides in every claim to it, including those which deem themselves 'emancipatory'. With the 'death of subject', they argue, any political enterprise that bases itself upon a privileged insight to 'truth' is 'always, already' inscribed within 'phallocentrism' and is therefore susceptible itself to deconstruction. In this sense, and paradoxically, poststructuralism appears both to support and to deny the legitimacy of resistance struggles against oppression. In the following sections, I look more closely at the specific positions these theorists articulate.

DERRIDA

Taken as a piece, Derrida's textual investigations in the history of philosophy have primarily been directed toward an analysis of the ways in which the composition of Western metaphysics -- itself a human construct -- organizes human consciousness. The attempt to escape from metaphysics through logic and rationality is ill-fated, he suggests, because it is precisely metaphysics that has established the conception of 'truth' which rationality rests upon. It is contradictory, therefore, and unprofitable to oppose metaphysics with the 'truth' of rationality (and likewise its corollaries of 'linear history,' 'science,' and 'subjectivity'). He notes,

> there is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language -- no syntax and no lexicon -- which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest (1978: 280).

Derrida understands this problem to be the fundamental crisis of our age. His discrete readings of 'end-of-philosophy', anti-humanist and anti-metaphysical 'structuralist' social theories are geared toward drawing out this dilemma and its consequences.

In Derrida's view, the very gesture of opposing the notion of an organized 'structure' to the idealism of metaphysics signals most clearly the impossibility of such a move. In the essay, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1978), he observes that the basic concept of 'structure' is predicated upon an idealistic assumption of exactly that which escapes structurality: a 'center'. Since structures are governed by a 'center,' then clearly this 'center' -- or 'truth,' which should be recognized as incorporating both the concepts of 'origin' (arche) and 'end' (telos) -- cannot also be governed by the structure. The foundations of 'structure' and of structuralism thus appear to lie in idealism. He notes, "the center is at the center of the totality and yet, since the center does not belong to the totality (is not part of the totality) the totality has its center elsewhere. The center is not the center" (1978: 279). Aimed to rid social and symbolic processes of the taint of metaphysics, structural paradigms, then, can only come into being through their own contradiction.

Although "Structure, Sign and Play" is concerned particularly with the structuralist anthropology of Claude Levi-Strauss (1969), the archetypal demonstration of Derrida's deconstructive argument is understood to be his rereading, in *Of Grammatology* (1976), of Ferdinand De Saussure's (1913) structuralist account of linguistics. Like Saussure himself, Derrida sees the question of linguistics as providing the paradigm and pattern for all other semiotic investigations.[11] I say that the Saussurean reading is archetypal, then, because the conclusions Derrida drew from it inform the theoretical premises and idiosyncratic lexicon which he brings to his later analyses. The distinction between Derrida's general analytic method and the example provided in *Of Grammatology* is therefore fundamentally -- in his words, 'always, already' -- blurred. While this approach is consistent with his overall philosophical understanding, it does make the task of summarizing his argument somewhat complicated.

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[11] The term 'semiotics' refers to the study of symbol systems, or, the science of signs.

Saussure had rebuffed earlier, metaphysical explanations of linguistic signs which posited a transcendental link between a word ('signifier') and its referent ('signified'). Under Saussure's conception, language consisted of a closed chain of 'signs' linked in 'binary oppositions'. The meaning of a word was not to be found in the external world, but in its *difference* from other terms in the chain. To distinguish what a sign *did not* mean, relative to its opposite, was to gain insight as to what in fact it *did* signify in a given context. In the *Course,* Saussure explained,

> in a language-state, everything is based on relations ... in language there are only differences. Even more important: a difference generally implies positive terms between which the difference is set up, but in language there are only differences without positive terms. Whether we take the signified or the signifier, language has neither ideas nor sounds that existed before the linguistic system, but only concepts and phonic differences that have issued from the system. The idea or phonic substance that a sign contains is of less importance than the other signs that surround it. Proof of this is that the value of a term may be modified without either its meaning or its sound being affected, solely because a neighboring term has been modified (1986: 652-53).

Derrida accepted Saussure's theory of the sign as composed of a signifier (sound or written image) and signified (concept or meaning), as well as the structuralist assumption that in language -- and consequently, he argued, in all forms of Western rational thought -- signs obtain meaning not intrinsically but through their difference from other signs. Following this logic, Derrida noted, what the chain of signification suggests is that every signified is 'always already' another signifier. Signs refer only to other signs, 'in an interminable chain of difference'. In this view, the end point of meaning, or 'Truth,' is impossible to access, since it is constantly 'deferred' one sign over.

Saussure, however, had not reached the same conclusion. Although he refused the metaphysical notion that meaning resided within linguistic signs, he nevertheless retained a metaphysical understanding when it came to how signs are articulated. In Saussure's reading, 'speech' should be privileged over 'writing', since 'writing' is once removed from the 'full presence' of the conscious subject, and therefore, following Plato, is twice removed from 'Truth'. Writing, thus, is conceived of as merely an *expression* of speech. Saussure pronounced, "language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first ... the spoken form alone constitutes the object" (1986: 94).

With this remark, in Derrida's view, Saussure contradicted his own premises. He notes, "the theme of the arbitrary is turned away from its most fruitful paths ... toward a hierarchizing teleology" (1981: 21). Derrida's point is not simply to indicate an error on Saussure's part, but to illustrate why this error was absolutely necessary in order that Saussure's theory could possibly be 'true'. For Saussure to accept the indeterminacy of stable meaning in linguistic signs (which the logic of the chain appears to require) would have resulted in his contradiction of a more fundamental scientific premise; namely, that rational analyses can provide access to 'truth'. What Saussure's rational investigation appeared to indicate, however, was that, in truth, there is no determinable 'truth' -- which is to say, it exceeds representation. This is the one scientific finding which science itself cannot allow. Derrida observes, "this was the moment when ... in the absence of a center, or origin, everything became discourse, that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified is never absolutely present outside a system of differences" (1978: 280).

Derrida responded to the dilemma in the *Course* by noting that, contrary to Saussure's overt pronouncement, what his analysis actually revealed was the metaphysical requirement for hierarchy within the linguistic chain. The 'binary oppositions' which compose the chain of signification are invariably constructed upon the assumed domination of one term by another. The first term is assumed to be more 'fully present', since positioned in closer proximity to the 'transcendental signified', or 'Truth'. The second term in the binarism is understood as dependent on the first, being defined as its negation, absence or lack.[12] What this suggests for the first term is that the meaning of the opposition originates within it.

In addition to Saussure's speech/writing distinction, Derrida has pointed to other notable hierarchies, including subject/object; inside/outside; culture/ nature, mind/body; and man/woman. In education we also see knowledge/ignorance, teacher/student, voice/silence, etc. In Derrida's view, this built-in, hierarchical opposition of meaning in metaphysics sets up the opportunity for its own dismantlement. Such dismantlement, however, cannot take the form of a simple opposition like that proposed by the structuralists, since, as we have seen, it is precisely the notion of 'opposition' that needs to be subverted.

Derrida formulated a strategy to undermine metaphysical oppositions through the method of 'deconstruction'. To deconstruct a binary opposition is to engage in two, simultaneous and continuous gestures. The first gesture is familiar to us: an 'overturning' or reversal of the hierarchy that brings high the term which has been rendered low (1981: 42). If we begin to consider meaning or 'truth' as residing in the second term rather than in the first, we upset the traditional semiotic system. The potential then becomes available for 'difference' in our understanding of the terms or concepts in question.

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[12] As the absence of the definitive, the second term should also be understood as disorder: the chaotic and impure which is expelled to the margin. See Kristeva (1982) and my discussion in Chapter Two.

As history has demonstrated, however, simple reversals, or revolutions, of this kind, leave the structure of domination itself intact and susceptible to reappropriation. A second gesture is required, that would dislodge the hierarchy altogether, "thereby disorganizing the entire inherited order and invading the entire field" (1981: 42). This second gesture, 'displacement', marks an 'interval' between the relationship of the terms in the binarism before and after the deconstruction. With the opposition thus disorganized, its previously stable significations are 'disseminated': dispersed and set into 'play'.

Derrida expresses this transition through the principle of *différance*, a neologism formed through the conflation of the verbs 'to differ' and 'to defer'.[13] The dual gestures of deconstruction indicate not only that stable meaning may be 'different,' since it is derived from its opposite, but that it is 'deferred', or ineffable, because it has been displaced. *Différance*, then, points to the absence of any primary site of meaning, or 'transcendental signified'. This is not to say that that there is no 'truth' but, returning to the argument from "Structure, Sign, and Play", that 'truth' in discourse is precisely what is located outside of or beyond. This absence, Derrida notes, cannot be revealed or logically proven, since to do so, in effect, would be to make the absence of meaning *present*: a logical contradiction. For this reason, *differance* is visible only in its 'traces'; in the spaces and gaps in textual and spoken discourses where a disjunction of meaning becomes inexplicably apparent.[14]

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[13] The importance of *différance* becomes clearer in Derrida's specific deconstruction of the speech/writing opposition delineated by Saussure. This argument is well worth pursuing, but it unfortunately falls outside the parameters of my present discussion. Here I will recount only the most general points. Following Plato, Saussure viewed writing as dissimulation. Writing passes itself off as speech in another form, as though it were 'speech written down', while in fact it should be recognized as constituting only a *representation* of speech. Writing, then, is a wolf in speech's clothing. In rebuttal, Derrida argued that writing accomplishes more -- or rather, that it accomplishes something different -- than simply 'clothing' speech (1976: 30). Writing provides the best, and in some cases, the only access to insight regarding the arbitrariness of language and communication. Writing, or *écriture*, enables the proliferation of meaning, called 'play'. *Différance* is a case in point. In the French, the sound image accompanying the term *'différance'* is indistinguishable from the term *'différence'*. Thus, in a spoken communication, the shift in meaning goes unnoticed. It is only in writing that this "alteration, this graphic and grammatical aggression" of *différance* becomes apparent (1981: 8). Derrida's exposition of this issue, an essay entitled "Différance," was first delivered as a spoken address to the Societé francaise de philosophie in 1968. In his lengthy, introductory remarks, he attempts to vocalize the significance of this "mute intervention of a written sign" (1981: 8). This text makes for interesting, if frustrating, reading. See "Différance" in Derrida (1982).

Generally speaking, then, Derrida's various discrete studies illustrate the arbitrariness that is inherent in language and the flaws in both humanist and even post-humanist assumptions that rational subjects can represent truth and regulate meaning in the (verbal and written) texts over which they claim authority/authorship. He notes, "subjectivity -- like objectivity -- is an effect of *differance*, an effect inscribed in a system of *differance*. There is no subject who is agent, author, and master of *differance* ..." (1981: 28).

Drawing from Lacanian psychoanalysis, Derrida has identified the observed 'law' of 'the Word' (as a transparent medium for representing truth) in Western culture to be complicitous with patriarchy, as in his coinage 'phal-logo-centrism'.[15] He argues further, and this is the crux of the matter, that despite our best intentions to doff the strictures of phallogocentrism, there is no thinking outside it: "il n'ya pas de hors-texte" (1967: 227). Every linguistically-made claim against the dominant order is

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[14] Freud's (1960) understanding of jokes as misplaced meaning is similar to *differance*. While *differance* constitutes a liability in scientific and philosophical discourses which direct themselves toward precision, in literature the unleashed play of differences is what makes a text a work of art. Derrida moves in two directions on this issue. First, he would prefer that science and philosophy give up on the quest for truth and celebrate *differance*. In his own work, he approaches philosophical texts *as* literature, focussing on their expository style more often than their major arguments, and demonstrating their susceptibility to multiple interpretations. On the subject of literature, Derrida suggests that the elusive, deceptive aspect of *differance* -- word play, multiple inferences, undecideability -- is what makes a text 'feminine' (1979). His comments on this score have come under extreme fire by feminists who accuse him of recuperating misogynist stereotypes. See below and Chapter Two.

[15] The specifics of Lacan's argument are characteristically complicated. Suffice here to point out the cultural identification between 'the Word' and 'the Father' and 'the Law'. Lacan draws attention to the homo-nymous relationship (similar to *differance*, in the French between 'le Nom ('name') du Pere' and 'le Non ('no') du Pere'.

'always, already' inscribed within it, and is therefore susceptible to deconstruction. This includes, most especially, the issue of gender and feminist subjectivity.

Invoking the reversal and displacement of traditional categories through *differance*, Derrida asserts that the binarism 'male/female' is a metaphysical and phallogocentric illusion that would-be feminists would do well to discard. In the face of essentialist conceptions of the category of 'woman' and of gender or sexual 'difference' articulated both within patriarchal and feminist discourses, Derrida calls for an understanding of 'woman' that makes no reference to metaphysical essentialism or partakes of logocentric, oppositional logic. He notes, "there is no such thing as a woman, as a truth in itself of woman in itself ... there is no truth in itself of the sexual difference in itself, of either man or woman in itself" (1979: 101-103). Thus woman is not 'different from' man; rather 'she' is the mark of difference; 'she' is 'Truth'; the 'other'; the *supplément* which cannot be contained within phallogocentric discourse. As Kristeva puts it, "woman can never be defined" (1981: 137).

In Derrida's view, 'woman' is located in writing, but not in the failed, phallogocentric attempts to access or represent meaning. Rather 'she' is meaning, that is, she is 'style,' as it is expressed fleetingly in the gaps and tensions (the 'veils and sails') of *differance*. He claims, "the question of the woman suspends the decidable opposition of true and non-true and inaugurates the epochal regime of quotation marks which is to be enforced for every concept belonging to the system of philosophical decidablity" 1977: 107).[16] Alice Jardine explains the argument thus, "women can (have) exist(ed) only as opposed to men within traditional categories of thought. Indeed women (especially feminists) who continue to think within these categories are henceforth seen as being men ..." (brackets in original; 1986: 564). Similarly, Linda Alcoff observes,

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[16] In his controversial rereading of Nietzsche, Derrida (1977) aimed to recuperate the (seemingly) obvious misogynist as, in fact -- or rather, in *style* -- a 'woman'. Because Nietzsche's aphoristic writing is paradoxical, quixotic, and contradictory, it maximizes the value of *differance*. This ability to set the text into play distinguishes Nietzsche's writing as *écriture feminine*. 'Woman', then, is not something that one is, but something that one does (or 'writes'), and moreover, something that can be done/written equally as well by those who, within dominant discourse, are named 'men' as by those who are named 'women'. See my section on Judith Butler in Chapter Two for a similar argument from a feminist perspective.

> for Derrida, women have always been defined as a subjugated difference within a binary opposition: man/woman, culture/nature, positive/negative, analytical/intuitive. [For feminists] to assert an essential gender difference is to reinvoke this oppositional structure. The only way to break out of this structure, and in fact to subvert the structure itself, is to assert total difference, to be that which cannot be pinned down or subjugated within a dichotomous hierarchy. Paradoxically, it is to be what is not. Thus feminists cannot demarcate a definitive category of 'woman' without eliminating all possibility for the defeat of logocentrism and its oppressive power (1988: 418).

These assertions of course bear enormous implications for postmodernism and feminist theory. Before turning to these, however, I would like to briefly review the theoretical arguments of the other major influence in poststructuralist thought, Michel Foucault.

FOUCAULT

Foucault, too, had much to say about language, truth, and the authoritative subject, but his form of analysis took a different tack, moving beyond the 'text' to to examine the nexus of power relations between individuals and institutions.[17] Foucault was a social critic, nevertheless he did not overtly argue against particular oppressive institutions and discourses. Instead, he asked, 'what are the historical and social conditions which make these institutions/discourses possible?'. And likewise,

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[17] According to Mark Poster (1989), Foucault's three critical positions are best understood in terms of his deconstruction of the problematic of the self. The 1960's period of 'archaeology' constituted a critique of the self as a rationalist instrument of domination, "by a strategy of reversal: madness versus reason". The development of 'geaneology' in the 1970's reflected the move to a critique of the self as centered consciousness, "by a strategy of displacement: the locus of intelligibility shifted from subject to structure". With Foucault's last transition in the 1980's, emphasis fell to the hermeneutic interpretation of self-constitution within discursive practices, using the strategy of "historicism"(Poster 1989: 54). Jennifer Gore (1993: 54) treats the three modes of inquiry as indicative of a shift in objects of analysis, from the 'archaeological' investigation of knowledge, to the 'geneological' study of power, to finally the 'ethical' study of the self. For additional interpretations of Foucault's intellectual development, see Dreyfus and Rabinow (1982) and Rajchman (1985).

'what underlies discourses which claim emancipatory intentions?'. Foucault insisted that a detailed, historically specific investigation into which (and whose) knowledges have been privileged and which have been suppressed in the development of our social consciousness/identity is a crucial tool for understanding the effects of social practices.

Foucault's greatest contributions to social theory have been his reconceptualizations of the notions of 'power,' 'truth,' and 'knowledge'. In his view, 'power' signifies a mutual relationship between free and consenting subjects (1982). These relationships are heterogeneous, local, and shifting, rather than systematically organized. Specific relations of power are interconnected through an an invisible 'web' or 'net', such that they can only be identified through their effects. In this sense, power is 'capillary': it is analysable only at its extremities. In order to understand contemporary power relations, it is necessary to perform an 'archaeology' or a 'geneology' of their roots. The theorist of power must work backward, beyond the accounts of historians, to locate its prehistoric artefacts.[18]

Power informs strategies of 'governance'; that is, it enables the structuration of "the possible field of action for others" (1982: 789). Foucault's historical analyses aimed to reveal a transition in Western forms of governance from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. Our society has moved, he maintained, from the the application of 'overt monarchical power' to a form of 'bio-power'. Where before we punished, today we 'discipline'; mobilizing regulative technologies to train, and ultimately to shape, the physical bodies of subjects to act in particular ways (1977).[19] This understanding holds serious consequences for the viability of resistance politics. Foucault insisted that we understand this change in the mode of governance and forms of power as a result of violence and domination. As Flax notes, for Foucault, "discursive shifts occur when violence is inflicted on violence, and 'the resurgence of new forces ... [is] sufficiently strong to dominate those in power'" (Foucault 1977: 151; in Flax 1990: 205). The notion that such shifts are indications of 'social improvement' or 'human progress' needs to be recognized as a 'truth effect' of the various discourses that have influenced the transition.

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[18] As discursive productions developed within a given 'regime of truth', historical accounts must be read as reflecting the *effects* rather than as describing the functionings, of power.

[19] We also discipline minds to govern their bodies. The first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1978) is devoted to assessing the historical transformations through which 'sex' has been discursively organized and regulated.

By 'discourse', Foucault referred to the institutionalized sets of mutually accepted norms and practices of communication through which social intelligibility is achieved. 'Discourse' refers not only to language, but to the socially-constructed contexts in which language and meaning are made possible. Magda Lewis and Roger Simon summarize the concept as indicating

> particular ways of organizing meaning-making practices. Discourse as a mode of governance delimits the range of possible practices under its authority and organizes the articulation of these practices within time and space although differently and often unequally for different people. Such governance delimits the field of relevance and definitions of legitimate perspectives and fixes norms for concept elaboration and the expression of experience (1986: 457).

Abandoning metaphysical assumptions about truth and Platonic forms, Foucault determined that 'knowledge' and 'truth' are the results of mutually accepted rules of discourse. We are able to distinguish between competing truth claims about knowledge not through application to external principles, but by measuring these claims against the standards which the relevant discourse supports. He observes, "it is always possible one could speak the truth in a void; one would only be in the true, however, if one obeyed the rules of some discursive 'policy' which would have to be reactivated every time one spoke" (1986: 154). In schools, for instance, we accept that a student is truly 'successful' if she responds 'correctly' on examinations, is 'well-behaved' and obedient, etc. Applying a different discursive grid to the school context would drastically change our evaluation. If we suspected the grading system as a form of ideological manipulation; or if we rewarded self-motivation and outspokenness over deference to institutional authority, then student 'success' would look quite different.

Foucault continued his discussion about discourse and truth by indicating that, because our measurements of 'truth' reside *within* particular discourses, there is no way of distinguishing between claims emerging out of different discursive contexts. The scientifically-proven truth of evolution is no more and no less true than the 'truth' of creation theory. Moreover, he would argue, the 'truth' that the 'Final Solution' was the worst moral atrocity of our century cannot be understood as any more compelling than the 'truth', from the Nazi perspective, that it accomplished a great social benefit.[20]

The concept of truth in discourse is further illuminated -- or complicated -- by his analysis of the relation between power and knowledge. The relevance of power in determining truth claims is paramount in Foucault's approach to discourse. As we have seen, what is at issue in distinguishing truth claims is less the *content* of legitimate or 'true' knowledges than their accordance with discursive rules. How these rules themselves are determined is a matter of power. Taking my example of the school, if the first evaluation of success is articulated by the teachers, the school administration, and beyond, by the economic elite, while the second evaluation is made only by the student herself, then the power imbalance between the two will judge in favour of the first claim to truth. In this sense, 'truth' must be understood as an 'effect' of power, rather than the reverse. Foucault captured this inflection of power in discursive arrangements in the concept of the 'regime of truth'.

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[20] In this sense, Foucauldian 'discourse' bears striking resemblance to Mannheim's (1936) notion of 'ideology'. Indeed, 'discourse' has been described as constituting the "material nature of ideology" (Weedon 1987: 31). Where Foucault breaks with the liberal Mannheim, however, is over the assumption that we can ever stand 'outside' discourse/ideology. See below.

Power may be oppressive but it is also productive. As noted, without power's regulatory function, there would be no measure of truth, and thus no foundation for knowledge or meaning within particular discourses. 'Power' and 'knowledge,' then, are intimately connected, which Foucault articulated through the notation 'power/ knowledge'.[21] He notes, "power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge" (1977: 27). More than anything else, what 'power/knowledge' indicates is the discursive impossibility of non-ideological, objective, or undistorted truth (Diamond and Quinby 1988: xi). As Flax (1990: 202) observes, unlike Derrida, Foucault denied the possibility that 'writing' or anything else could provide a space for truth that is beyond or outside power. This understanding raises a fundamental dilemma for resistance efforts, since without recourse to 'truth,' there is no basis for distinguishing between 'valid' and 'invalid' struggles for power. For this reason, Foucault, like Nietzsche and Weber before him, and others after, remained sceptical of and was at pains to distance himself from any organized political enterprise which hailed itself as a true solution to oppression.[22] As Sayer observes,

> the soulful corporation or the compassionate state are, by virtue of the very constitution of these social forms, contradictions in terms ... This makes any notion of an emancipatory politics deeply problematic, in so far as the very forms in which modern politics are conducted -- state, parties, ideologies -- partake of the same nexus of estrangement (1991: 154).

Foucault's ambivalence toward resistance movements becomes evident in his 'empirical' work on discourses of governance. In the 1970's he undertook detailed historical investigations of the modern 'disciplines' of social science, clinical psychology, medicine, and criminal justice.[23] These 'archaeological' studies revealed the integral function of power in creating fields of knowledge and the objects of their investigations. He notes, "(archaeology is) a task that consists of not -- of no longer -- treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (1986: 137).

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[21] Which is not to say they are the same. Foucault observes,

> when I read -- and I know it has been attributed to me -- the thesis 'knowledge is power' or 'power is knowledge', I begin to laugh, since studying their relation is precisely my problem. If they were identical I would not have to study them and I would be spared a lot of fatigue as a result. The very fact that I pose the question of their relation proves clearly that I do not identify them" (in Gore 1993: 51).

[22] This is the case at least in his writings. Foucault's private involvement in prisoners' action groups in the 1970's makes for interesting speculation on his ideas about local, individual action.

By probing 'beneath' these power-laden discourses, Foucault aimed to uncover the 'local' knowledges which had been 'suppressed' under these institutional 'regimes of truth'. The reappearance of these 'subjugated' knowledges should indicate the incompleteness and ideological character of 'official' claims to truth. Following Nietzsche's critique of the 'will to power', Foucault argued that the universalistic explanations of human history (for postmodernists, the 'metanarrative') which these official discourses produce are actually terroristic 'technologies' aimed at constructing subjects in the image of the current ideology. Because they contradict the official explanations, local knowledges are 'dangerous'. The term 'subjugated knowledges,' he observes, refers to

> a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity ... popular knowledge though it is far from being a general commonsense knowledge, but is on the contrary a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it -- through the reappearance of this knowledge ... criticism performs its work (1980: 82).

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[23] The understanding that modern relations of power, unlike earlier formations, are discrete and localized informed Foucault's decision to focus on these types of institutions. In contrast to the abstracted objects and highly mediated effects of 'juridical power', i.e. law, state, and religion, these 'disciplinary' institutions work concretely, on individual bodies and minds.

In his 'geneological' period, Foucault aimed to set these 'subjugated' knowledges into play: "let us give the term *genealogy* to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allows us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today" (1980: 83). Against the scientific perception of a comprehensible, progressive human history, which he identified as the "prodigious machinery of the will to truth, with its vocation of exclusion" (1986: 151), Foucault pitted an image of a chaotic agglomeration of conflicts and struggles.[24] A recounting of these struggles should unmask the ideological imperative that guides 'neutral' science.

While the radical potential of 'subjugated knowledges' can be theorized, it is less easily translated into a vehicle for political action. At least two issues confront resistance movements that seek to mobilize Foucault's analyses. First, Foucault's understanding of the subversive aspect of 'subjugated knowledges' is conditioned by the requirement that those who generate local knowledges 'speak for themselves' (Philp 1985:76). In this view, truly emancipatory movements cannot be organized and directed from a central location. As with Lyotard, 'marginalized' resistance must remain marginal. The metaphor of the 'capillary', which points to the circulating nature of power throughout the social body, underscores this requirement for non-centrality. Since, in Foucault's view, power is never static, centralized efforts to 'capture' it once and for all are doomed to failure. He argued instead for a loose coordination of dispersed and individuated practices of resistance. Madan Sarup summarizes this point as follows:

> because power is multiple and ubiquitous, the struggle against it must be localized. Equally, however, because it is a network and not a collection of isolated points, each localized struggle induces effects on the entire network. Struggle, therefore, cannot be totalized; a single

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[24] Indeed, in contrast to Derrida and the structuralists, Foucault claims, "the history which bears and determines us has the form of war rather than language" (1980: 114).

> centralized, hierarchical organization setting out to seize a single centralized hierarchical power is not possible. Struggle can, however, be serial, that is, in terms of horizontal links between one point of struggle and another (1983: 98).

At another level, however, Foucault disputed whether even 'local' struggles for 'subjugated knowledges' are possible. From his 'archaeological' studies, he concluded that modern disciplinary institutions actively shape what human beings are capable of knowing about themselves and their environments and in regulating what they can say about and how they might act upon what they know. This line of thinking led him to renounce the concept of an autonomous subject of history as just one in a long line of liberal ideological fictions (including also the notions of 'freedom', 'democracy', and 'rationality'). For Foucault, it not only is naive but plays into ideological hands to presume that individual subjects should (or can) know anything more 'true' about themselves and their experiences than what the prevailing social discourse permits. It is the biological and human sciences which produce the 'facts of human nature', and, as Flax observes, "tell us what it is to be human. They 'normalize' the 'individual' who is constituted and named by these discourses" (1990: 207). The concept of a subjective, core 'identity', then, rather than offering a ballast for resistance, serves a 'disciplinary' function by organizing discrete experiences into discursively intelligible categories. Nancy Fraser notes,

> for Foucault, the subject is merely a derivative product of a certain contingent, historically specific set of linguistically infused social practices that inscribe power relations upon bodies. Thus there is no foundation, in Foucault's view, for critique oriented around the notions of autonomy, reciprocity, mutual recognition, dignity, and human rights. Indeed, Foucault rejects these humanist ideals as instruments of domination deployed within the current "disciplinary power/knowledge regime(1989: 57).

The objective of resistance, then, should not be to claim an 'identity' but to refuse such categorization altogether at the conceptual level. In Foucault's view, as Patricia

Elliott explains it, "the object is not to discover and argue for what we are, but to *refuse* what we 'are' "(1991: 7).

Despite Foucault's political ambivalence, which Mark Poster deems "theoretical ascetism" (1989: 114), many resistance intellectuals, including feminists, find much in his writings which seems sympathetic to their projects.[25] While "the never-ending self-critique called for by Foucault can (seem) paralyzing" (Lather 1991a: 166), the understanding of communication as discourse can also be seen as providing a new site of political action. Through the interruption of discourses, and the subjection of their 'truths' to constant rereading and reinterpretation, the illusion that language is transparent may be shattered, and subjects provided with the opportunity to refuse the meanings that have been assigned to their experiences. In this sense, some argue, Foucauldian poststructuralism demonstrates a sense of political insurgency and normative direction which is only latent (if it exists at all) in the generally negative tactics of deconstruction.[26]

It strikes me, however, that this decidedly selective approach to Foucault in the end is self-defeating, since it requires the critic to commit that ultimate folly which Foucault argued against: the indignity of speaking for (an)other (Philp 1990: 68). If we are to take Foucault at his word, he cannot be read as any less as suspicious of organized claims to insight than Derrida: "my point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper - and pessimistic activism." (quoted in Poster 1989: 114).

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[25] See, for example, the essays in Diamond and Quinby (1988), or Sawicki (1992). In my view, Jane Flax's more tentative response to Foucault is preferable. She notes,

> Foucault's work does have an ethical or 'positive' intention -- one bound up with freedom. Foucault hopes at least to facilitate better outcomes in the ongoing if submerged struggles between heterogeneous and localized 'subjected knowledge/practices' and the forces of biopower. However Foucault's notion of freedom or the possible locus of opposition shares many of the weaknesses of that of Derrida ... It has an aesthetic or even romantic cast that by its nature excludes important social relations from further consideration (1990: 209).

I discuss Flax's qualified acceptance of postmodern theory in Chapter Two.

[26] See Fraser (1989) for a report on the state of politics in deconstruction.

In the following chapters, I consider the various ways in which these difficult and ambivalent forms of postmodern and poststructural social analysis have been engaged by theorists and activists who are committed to political change. Chapter Two introduces this political dimension, focussing on feminist approaches to postmodern conceptualizations of discourse, truth, and the 'death of the subject'. It is in the context of feminism, I suggest, that the most significant tensions between postmodernism and contemporary politics come to light. An examination of the ways in which these tensions have been negotiated may be useful for informing the postmodern dilemma faced by critical pedagogy. In Chapter Three, I turn to consider this dilemma in depth.

POLITICS

CHAPTER TWO

MAPPING A PASSAGE: THE CASE OF FEMINISM

Postmodernism is a valuable form of discipline.
-- Jane Flax, 1990.

The poststructuralist conception of the 'death of the subject' disorganizes what up to now has constituted the primary unit of analysis in social theories and programs for political and cultural change. In light of this shift, resistance theorists have been obliged to call into question many of their most basic presuppositions. My intention in this chapter is to map out these reflexive investigations as they are taking place within the discourse of feminist theory and politics. To do so I have chosen to highlight three representative feminist responses to the 'death of the subject' and other postmodern conceptualizations of discursive power and truth. The theorists I have selected -- Nancy Hartsock (1987, 1990a, 1990b), Judith Butler (1990, 1992), and Jane Flax (1988, 1990, 1992) -- demonstrate markedly different approaches in their treatment of postmodern concerns. I read these as, respectively, the rejection of postmodernism as non-utilizeable for feminist politics; the 'embrace' of postmodernism and the adoption of its strategies for feminist deployment; and finally, a qualified acceptance of the postmodern perspective that emphasizes the tentative character of its commitments both to feminism and to postmodernism.

A comparison of these differential responses should assist in accomplishing two tasks. First, it may help to draw out the contested meanings of the postmodernist philosophical conceptions which I outlined in Chapter One. Attacked or applauded, it appears that the tenets of postmodernism have triggered a crisis of identity which contemporary political movements cannot ignore. The second, and more important function of my comparison, therefore, is to demonstrate the profound shifts which postmodernism has provoked in feminist self-conceptions.

As my objective is to consider the limits and possibilities postmodern philosophy suggests for political action *generally*, rather than to assess the specific arguments that feminism raises against patriarchy, I could conceivably have drawn on other political discourses to develop a similar analysis. South nationalists, gay and lesbian activists, anti-racist theorists and many others are developing sizeable literatures on the intersections of their particular political motivations and postmodernism.

I focus on feminism for several reasons. First, the conclusions (or anti-conclusions) reached by poststructuralist analysis appear as especially relevant to feminist politics both in view of Foucault's (1978, 1985, 1986) work in the *History of Sexuality* series and, perhaps more significantly, with respect to Derrida's (1978) concerted efforts to single out gender difference as the exemplary instance of 'undecidability'. As Robert Scholes observes, "feminism and deconstruction - and you can see it in the very names - are founded upon antithetical principles: feminism upon a class concept and deconstruction upon the deconstructing of all such concepts" (1987: 208). Thus an examination of feminist responses to postmodernism should be able to cut to the heart of the political and social issues at stake.

In my view, the concerns raised in feminist spheres over the question of postmodernism are symptomatic of the types of problems encountered in other areas of political struggle. The successful approaches to postmodern antifoundationalism that have been developed within certain strands of feminist theory may therefore be useful for informing solutions elsewhere, including, notably, the field of critical pedagogy. In my discussion of Henry Giroux's vision of postmodern education in Chapter Three, I will return to the issues raised here as a way of elucidating a potential conciliation between the cautionary aspects of postmodernism and the aims of emancipatory education. Moreover, since the pedagogical debates which I investigate in Chapter Four have developed in part out of a discourse that is self-identified as 'feminist and poststructuralist', a discussion here of the broader context in which those questions obtain should contribute a greater sense of coherence within the thesis as a whole.

Finally there is the issue of location, which I take to be perhaps the most significant and undoubtedly the most problematic argument to advance. Although, as we shall see, feminism(s) and postmodernism(s)[1] collide in other ways, their intersection has been a close to happy one in emphasizing the situated and partial character of knowledge, and in rejecting the objective, uncontingent and thus 'authoritative' author who presents a 'view from nowhere' (Haraway 1988: 589).[2] My understanding of the "value of experience and the importance of its representation in the form of 'life-writing' - however difficult or even falsifying that process might turn out to be" (Hutcheon 1989: 167) obliges me to bring forward the embodied location from which I write and to acknowledge at the outset the political priorities which shape my work. My choice in focussing on 'feminist' theorists, then, reflects a personal commitment to the transformation of oppressive gender relations. I identify as a 'woman' and as a 'feminist' and because of this, the questions raised by feminist thinkers concerning the viability of postmodern politics are those which are most relevant 'for me'. As this chapter unfolds, the reasons for my hesitation in making such a pronouncement should become evident.

My discussion begins with a general overview of the sets of problems which postmodern philosophy engenders for feminist theory and politics. I then turn to look to specifically at Hartsock, Butler, and Flax, situating their positions within this 'grid' of general philosophical problems and providing short readings of their basic arguments. In conclusion, I shift back to generalities to reconsider the goals of radical identity politics after the 'death of the subject'.

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[1] I mark these terms in the plural to highlight both as contested, indeterminate fields.

[2] The conclusions drawn from this awareness, however, as I shall discuss in my analysis of Nancy Hartsock, are far from standard.

COMING TO TERMS WITH THE DEATH OF THE SUBJECT

As I attempted to outline in Chapter One, the concept of the 'death' of the rational subject of the Enlightenment provides a shorthand notation for understanding the self as a discursive construction. Some critics and likewise, some proponents of postmodernist/ poststructuralist theories have indicated that the 'death of the subject' implies the non-existence of the social world except as a 'text', and that henceforth we should forget politics and apply ourselves only to the study of word play and 'interesting conversation'. I hope that my discussion here will demonstrate the case to be otherwise.

Under Enlightenment conceptions, subjectivity has been postulated in terms of sameness ('identity') and coherence or wholeness ('individuality'). Postmodern and poststructuralist theories suggest that this description of subjectivity is an ideological tool which masks the actually fragmented character of the self.[3] In this sense, the claim that subjectivity is discursively constructed challenges the injunction within dominant Western discourses to view human beings as unified, rational and fully conscious social actors. This does not mean that we are not in the world, but that our understanding of the world -- and of ourselves in it -- is distorted by the lens of discourse.

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[3] The question as to whether the coherent subject *ever* existed, while important within the history of philosophy, is less crucial to my discussion here, of how subjective fragmentation is being treated as a contemporary problem. See Chapter One, Note 7.

As a metaphor, then, the 'death of the subject' precautions against taking our perceptions of what is real and what is natural (perceptions such as the notion of the subject) *as* real and natural. Not only this, but it reveals the ambition to break free from discursive illusions as a violent will to power which may be successful in oppressing but ultimately will fail in gaining access to 'truth'. In itself, such a claim does not necessarily challenge the possibility of emancipatory politics or of social change. It does, however, require fundamental shifts in the way we think about sociality and its transformation.

If modern social theories can be identified by their particular ontological, epistemological, and normative presuppositions, one way of assessing the changes conditioned by the 'death of the subject' is to consider how these investigative categories have been reorganized.[4] Following the postmodern turn, feminist theory has fragmented over its differential approaches to these three categories and the relative weighting which they have been accorded in political directives.[5] It is worthwhile in beginning to review some of the 'new' questions that have been raised.

In ontological terms, 'the death of the subject' requires feminists to reconsider the nature of the particular social identity which feminist theory has been understood to describe and feminist politics to represent. The historical givenness of the concept of 'woman' has been replaced by radical doubt: what is implied by the category 'woman'? Is 'woman' recognizable by essential morphological, biological, or psychological traits which do not appear in men? Or does 'woman' indicate the 'lack' of masculine characteristics? Perhaps 'woman' designates a social location within discursive power arrangements? Is 'woman', then, a political, economic, or cultural category -- or a combination of all three and others? Do all people who fall within the category 'woman' exhibit the same qualities and characteristics? Do they occupy the same social position? If not, why are all of them called 'women'? What is -- or rather, *is there* -- a common denominator? What is our identity, feminists ask, and for that matter, what does it mean to have one? Some theorists have argued that answers to these questions must be sought before we can move toward the 'new' epistemological issues.

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[4] I thank Raymond Morrow for providing me with this tripartite grid for understanding social theories.

[5] This is not to suggest that 'feminism' *ever* implied a homogeneous theoretical position or political agenda. Nevertheless, despite the differences between liberal, socialist and radical feminism -- as they developed in the West after the 'Second Wave' -- there *was* consistency in the general identification of 'feminism' with the category 'woman'.

The postmodern conjugation of power and knowledge transforms 'neutral' epistemology into overtly political questions about agency. *'How do we know'* becomes a moot point when the more central issue appears as *'what do we do with what we know?'*. With the 'death of the subject', postmodernism reconceptualizes self-knowledge as discursively produced within phallogocentric regimes of truth. Postmodern epistemology asks us, then, in what ways can such discursively-produced knowledge inform action? For feminism, as for other modes of resistance politics, this issue presents itself as a potentially major stumbling block. Is it possible to transform the same oppressive discourses that have produced our understanding of ourselves? If there is no thinking outside of discourse, how can we trust what we know and how will we know how to act? With questions such as these, epistemology flows into the domain of the normative.

Lenin posed the fundamental normative question of the modern era. Postmodernism changes the stakes of the issue, asking not only *what* is to be done but, more radically, *why?*. In the absence of any extra-discursive arbiter to judge between competing claims to truth, on what basis can we distinguish between justice and injustice? What becomes the moral imperative to act? For feminism, this question demands a depth of self-scrutiny that has never been undertaken before.

Recent writings by political theorists/philosophers Nancy Hartsock, Judith Butler and Jane Flax demonstrate a broad range of responses to these foundational questions. With their differential responses come differential perspectives on the meaning of feminist theory and the goals of feminist politics. In the following sections I propose to examine their respective positions and arguments, beginning with a discussion of Hartsock's negative assessment of postmodernism, which she detailed clearly in a series of three companion papers published between 1987 and 1990.[6]

NANCY HARTSOCK: POSTMODERNISM AND THE DEATH OF POLITICS

Nancy Hartsock argues on behalf of what she describes as a 'materialist feminist' vision of identity politics. Because of her emphasis on materialism -- on the conditions of existence, as Marx put it, of 'real, living individuals' -- Hartsock sees the postmodern persistence with depth ontological issues ('what is identity?'; 'is the category 'woman' an illusory construction?') as irresponsible and fundamentally at odds with the goals of feminism. In whose interest is it, she asks, to question the existence of the category of 'women' when there is ample empirical evidence to demonstrate that women clearly *do* exist as a group of persons who are systematically oppressed under patriarchal forms of sociality? Hartsock observes that to date, Western feminism has taken an exceptionally narrow view of its subject, as white, heterosexual, and middle-class. This exclusionary conceptualization replicates the patriarchal binarism of 'subjects' and others' which feminism should be committed to dismantling.[7] An expansion of the category to recognize and include female 'others' thus represents an essential step toward untangling the contradiction and strengthening feminist discourse.

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[6] Since Hartsock's argument is contiguous within the three texts, I will distinguish between them only in page references. Hartsock bases her discussion upon an analysis of the works of Michel Foucault and Richard Rorty, whom she takes to be representative of the broad spectrum of postmodern philosophers. As my discussion of postmodernism and poststructuralism has generally focussed upon the European theorists, for consistency's sake I will tend to Hartsock's consideration of Foucault over the American Rorty. Hartsock's treatment of Rorty leads her to the same conclusions as in her reading of Foucault, therefore my selective emphasis should not detract from the general development of her argument.

In Hartsock's view, however, such expansion should not be confused with explosion. For feminist politics to remain viable, the category 'woman' and the ontological concept of the feminist subject need to be retained. Hartsock's materialism enables her to dismiss the epistemological hesitations of poststructuralism. The effects of sexism inform women's consciousness. Whether or not these experiences are discursive constructions means little while they remain our experiences. Moreover, to question the reliability of our understanding of these experiences is to undermine the basis of resistance struggle. Hartsock suspects such postmodern scepticism as an insidious, back-lash attempt to contain feminist forces: if 'women' are not real, then sexism cannot be real, and patriarchy, really, is no longer an issue -- it's all in our heads. If we would only think about ourselves 'differently', the problem of sexism will go away. Hartsock's normative injunction, then, is for feminism to oppose the 'death of the subject' as a component part of patriarchal ideology.

Hartsock's comments are instructive in drawing out the relationship between theory and practice. In her view, the normative value of any particular social theory or philosophy is measured by the degree to which it can adequately reveal foundational power relations which organize social experience. To the extent that a theory is successful in this demonstration, it should be capable of informing practical action toward the transformation of the oppressive social structure. This emphasis on practical application requires that theorists remain actively engaged in political movements and cognizant of the material issues affecting the subjects of their abstract analyses. According to Hartsock, there is no 'theory for theory's sake': when academics distantiate themselves from specific goals for social transformation, their work becomes susceptible to cooptation. She observes: "if (academics) become cut off from the political perspectives provided by links with activists we are more lightly to be caught up in the questions that move other academics who have never shared our political commitments (1987: 189). With this early statement, Hartsock signals a warning about the hegemonic dangers of postmodernist philosophy and the threat it poses to transformative political movements.

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[7] Hartsock draws from the work of Albert Memmi to substantiate her analysis of the Western construction of 'subjects' and 'others.' Within rational Enlightenment thought, it is argued, 'identity' is established through a binaristic mechanism of negation. The subject, then, is defined by what it is not: 'a' and 'not-a'. Of necessity , then, the category of the 'other' is a catch-all depository of all characteristics which the subject does not reflect. .The 'other' is 'chaotic' and 'impure', which is to say, 'undefined'. See my discussion of Derrida in Chapter One.

Hartsock attributes the growing feminist interest in postmodernism to the awakened recognition within 'white feminism' of the question of 'difference'. In the 1980's, the critical voices of lesbians, women of colour, working-class women, women from the South, and others finally began to be heard within the ranks of mainstream feminism. 'Second wave' feminism, they argued, in nearly all of its permutations, had committed a gross extrapolation of the political concerns of a select group onto the entire portion of the world population gendered female. Feminist theory had postulated a homogeneous, universal subject under the category of 'woman', whose characteristics were clearly those of the women who developed it. The agenda of 'feminist' politics reflected the concerns of this subject. 'Second wave' feminism spoke not for 'woman' or even 'women' but strictly for a group of females located in a social position of relative dominance. Women who had been excluded from this representation argued that social identity markers (race, class, ability, sexuality, etc.) locate individuals, including those of the same gender, in differential positions within the social matrix. These different social locations result in the development of different political priorities. In the 1980's the task was set to open up 'feminism' in such a way that it could argue against patriarchy without making totalizing and essentialist claims about the the individuals it claimed to represent. The postmodern refusal of 'grand narratives' appeared to offer a potential solution. Hartsock notes, "here were arguments about incommensurability, multiplicity, and the lack of definitive answers" (1987: 16). Nevertheless, in her view, postmodern radicalism must be read simply as the flip side of the Enlightenment coin. For oppressed and marginalized groups, the oppressor's theory, whether in its original or reactionary form, is unlikely to provide the keys to transformation and empowerment.

Hartsock bases her argument on a reading of Foucault's analytics of power.[8] She observes that in his imaging of power relations as elaborately woven threads linking subjects in a web or net, Foucault portrays a situation of interdependent connections rather than the systematic marginalization of particular groups. Likewise, the image of the capillary, rather than describing the disenfranchisement of the oppressed, presents power as evenly dispersed throughout the social body. In Hartsock's view, such a description of social power denies the possibility of ever locating the roots of oppression so as to dismantle them. For Foucault, she claims, "power is everywhere, and so ultimately, nowhere" (1990a: 170).

Not only this, but the postmodern disavowal of the integrity of the subject removes any impetus for political action: "Foucault's is a world in which objects move, rather than people, a world in which subjects become obliterated, or, rather, recreated as passive objects, a world in which passivity or refusal represent the only possible choices" (1990a: 167). According to Hartsock, this paralysis which postmodernism appears to condition makes it not only useless but dangerous for feminist struggle.

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[8] For Foucault, 'power' signifies a loosely linked series of mutual relationships between free and consenting subjects. Power relations are not hierarchically or systematically organized. They can only be identified through their effects, and resisted locally, at their extremities. See my Chapter One for a longer discussion.

What comes through most clearly in Foucault's theory, she observes with irony, is that he could afford "to take the position of not being in a position to take a position" (1990b:21).[9] For those located in less privileged spots on the social grid, this postmodern posture comes off as remarkably cavalier.

Her perspective reflects an increasingly common response among resistance intellectuals to the novelties of postmodern philosophy. The debunking of the grand narrative holds out the promise of clearing a space for voices which have been marginalized and excluded under current paradigms. Yet, in its insistence upon the discursively constructed character of subjectivity, poststructuralism appears to reject the possibility of knowledge altogether. How else, it is asked, are we to understand poststructuralism's disavowal of an autonomous subject of history who is privy to the realities of his (or her) oppression and is capable of articulating them? For those located at the receiving end of the power hierarchy, however, poverty, racism, and sexism define experiences which, as Cornel West puts it, one "*cannot not know* "(in Stephanson 1988a: 277), and moreover, which one cannot afford to ignore. This apparent insouciance has prompted critics like Hartsock to accuse poststructuralism of bad faith and connivance with the hegemonic forces it claims to deconstruct. Is there, after all, very much difference between a bourgeois philosophy bent on objectivity and its poststructuralist critique which denies the subject? Hartsock asks,

> why is it, exactly at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subject-hood becomes 'problematic'? Just when we are forming our own theories about the world, uncertainty emerges about whether the world can be adequately theorized? Just when we are talking about the changes we

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[9] For Hartsock, this apparent contradiction reflects Foucault's subjective location on the social power grid as male, European, and intellectual. This privileged location, which, following Said (1979), she describes as 'with power,' translates into pacified acceptance of the idea that power relations are impervious to systematic alteration (1990a: 167).

> want, ideas of progress and the possibility of 'meaningfully' organizing human society becomes suspect? (1987: 197).

According to Hartsock, Foucault, and the postmodern tradition his theory represents, conflate all forms of epistemology with the rational objectivity privileged by the Enlightenment. Having identified the impossibility of attaining such an objective stance, the postmodern theorists foreclose on the possibility of identity politics altogether, as if, Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson observe, nothing more were at stake than "intramural debates in professional philosophy" (1988: 92). In place of the anti-epistemological groundlessness of the postmodern critique, Hartsock argues for the elaboration of a 'revised and reconstructed' theory of power, knowledge, and subjectivity (1990a:170).

Similarly to Dorothy Smith's (1989, 1990) conception of the feminine 'bifurcated consciousness', Hartsock makes the Marxist argument that class-conscious oppressed groups hold privileged insight regarding the contradictions in dominant ideology.[10] Because marginalized groups see the world through the eyes of the oppressor as well as their own, their knowledge of social reality is less circumscribed and closer to truth. She claims, "while (marked epistemologies) recognize themselves as never fixed or fully achieved they can claim to present a truer or more adequate account of reality" (1990b: 30). It is on the basis of this type of 'truer' knowledge, which Hartsock deems the 'epistemologies of marked subjectivities' (1990b: 24) that the most appropriate actions for developing social justice will be made. For this reason, it is essential that marginalized groups establish and strengthen a self-conscious conception of themselves, "as subjects rather than just objects of history" (1990a: 171). In terms of gender oppression and the struggle against patriarchy, this suggests that the category of 'women', while qualified and marked by our other subject positions, is one that we cannot afford to give up.

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[10] Marx held that the working class consciousness contained within it all other consciousnesses. That is, the awakened working class is privy both to the world view espoused by the bourgeoisie, as well as to its own experience, while the consciousness of the bourgeoisie is limited to their own perceptions -- precisely because the bourgeois experience is defined as the only reality.

Hartsock's criticisms of postmodernism raise important, perhaps fundamental questions concerning the influence of philosophical presuppositions on practical strategies of resistance. I would argue however, that her defence of 'marked subjectivities', is problematic on several levels. With her pronouncement that, for the oppressed, "the status of liminality gives us a cognitive edge" (1009b: 28), Hartsock allows her Marxist roots to overtake her apparently 'revised and reconstructed' theory. Rather than advancing identity politics beyond Enlightenment ideals, this hierarchization of truth-claims appears to mimic the hegemonic posture of the metanarrative so cogently criticized by Lyotard. Although Hartsock's 'marked epistemologies' may present themselves as 'views from somewhere', nevertheless she would ascribe to them the standard by which to measure the truth of discourses emerging elsewhere.

Additional problems are reflected in her requirement that feminism retain the category of 'woman' as a foundational precept. In Hartsock's view this category must expand beyond the representation of female identities marked white, middle-class, and heterosexual. Yet, the notion of *female identity* itself remains central to her conception of feminism, functioning as a 'nodal point of affinity' to link disparate experiences for the purposes of political solidarity. This perspective makes for considerable theoretical difficulty. When the category 'woman' has been expanded to include as many differences as there are women, discerning the primary objective of a political movement committed to the representation of this category becomes problematic. Within such an arena of differences, whose needs will come first, and whose will again be marginalized?[11]

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[11] I discuss this problem at greater length in Chapter Three, Note 22.

From this perspective, Hartsock's position appears to succumb to the same criticism she levelled against postmodernism. By unreflexively retaining modernist conceptualizations of subjectivity and epistemology, Hartsock's argument, as she complains of Foucault, remains 'imprisoned' within the terrain of the Enlightenment (1990b: 19). Keeping in mind the issues raised explicitly in Hartsock's presentation, as well as the implicit questions that emerge through a critical reading of her arguments, I would like to turn now to consider Judith Butler's (1990; 1992) very different analysis of the question of feminism and the subject.

JUDITH BUTLER: POSTMODERNISM AND THE BIRTH OF AGENCY

Rather than confronting postmodernism on a metatheoretical plane as Hartsock does, Butler's feminist discussion begins *inside* postmodernism, adopting its central assumptions and analytical methods to develop a deconstructive geneology of gender identity.[12] So far as ontology goes, Butler sees endeavours to redefine the subject of feminism as misguided. Like Hartsock, she observes that under the binaristic model of identity construction, the discrete 'subject' is established by distinction from what it is not.[13] Thus the discursive gesture that produces the 'subject' simultaneously induces the 'other': the marginalized, not-subject. She notes, "this appears as an expulsion of alien elements but the alien is effectively established through this expulsion. The construction of the not-me as the abject establishes the boundaries of the body which are also the first contours of the subject" (1990: 133).

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[12] Interestingly, Butler's work demonstrates the possibilities for merging Foucauldian geneology with Derridean deconstruction - a conciliation which she herself observes is mostly unwelcome in French theoretical circles. See Butler (1992: 4).

[13] As I have noted, Hartsock supports her notion of the subject/object construction with reference to the post-colonial social historian Albert Memmi (1967). Butler cites Julia Kristeva's work in psychoanalysis. At both social and psychical levels, the formation of 'a' appears to take place through the simultaneous production of 'not-a'.

Unlike Hartsock, however, Butler follows this conception through to its logical end. Expanding the feminist subject to include as many 'differences' as there are 'women', is a conceptual impossibility: always, already, some 'other' is excluded: She notes,

> the theories of feminist identity that elaborate predicates of color, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and able-bodiedness invariably close with an embarrassed 'etc.' at the end of the list. Through this horizontal trajectory of adjectives, these positions strive to encompass a situated subject, but invariably fail to be complete .... What political impetus is to be derived from the exasperated 'etc.' that so often occurs at the end of such lines? This is a sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself. It is the *supplément*, the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all (1990: 143).

Read in this light, the impulse to define a feminist subject appears to run counter to the feminist goal of dismantling exclusionary structures. Before scrambling to establish a feminist 'nodal point of affinity', then, Butler would prefer that we step back to consider why we think that feminism *needs* to rally around a subject.

Contrary to Hartsock's epistemological argument, Butler denies that a concept of subjectivity is necessary for informing political action. Rather, in her view, the possibility of agency is both predicated upon and constitutes the *refusal* of identity categories as functional components in 'juridico-disciplinary' regimes of truth (1993: 3). In normative terms, then, Butler asks that feminist politics be organized pragmatically and contingently, around circumstances as they arise, rather than on the basis of a predetermined ontology. The requirement for solidarity in advance of elaborating political interests and taking political action inhibits the development of new forms of coalitional struggle. It is only by making the movement issue-oriented, she argues, rather than identity-oriented, that feminism can adequately subvert the problem of exclusivity both outside and within its own ranks. She notes, "without the compulsory expectation that feminist actions must be instituted from within some stable, unified and agreed upon identity, those actions might well get a quicker start and seem more congenial to a number of 'women' for whom the meaning of the category is permanently moot " (1990: 15).

Butler's thesis is nuanced and complicated. I will only attempt here to sketch out her position in general terms. She begins by accepting the Foucauldian presupposition that 'subjectivity' is a discursive production, arguing emphatically, however, that this does *not* the signal of the end of politics or of agency. In an implicit reference to Hartsock, Butler observes,

> there is the refrain that, just now, when women are beginning to assume the place of subjects, postmodern positions come along to announce that the subject is dead ... Some see this as a conspiracy against women and other disenfranchised groups who are now only beginning to speak on their own behalf. But what precisely is meant by this? .... To take the construction of the subject as a political problematic is not the same as doing away with the subject; to deconstruct the subject is not to negate or throw away the concept; on the contrary, deconstruction implies only that we suspend all commitments to that to which the term 'the subject' refers .... To deconstruct is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question, and most importantly, to open up a term, like the subject, to a usage or redeployment that previously has not been authorized (1992: 14).

Audre Lorde (1982) has pointed to the illogic in using 'the master's tools to dismantle the master's house'. Similarly, Butler claims that to transform oppressive discourses concerning identity we cannot argue on behalf of or make application to an identity that only takes on meaning inside of them. The commitment to representing specific 'identities' embeds political movements within the established oppositional, binaristic structure. In retaining the concept of the subject as the feminist point of departure, then, we support the same terms of the debate we seek to challenge. From this position, feminist resistance must be read ultimately as functioning to reconsolidate rather than disrupt the dominant order.[14] Butler observes,

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[14] See Tony Whitson (1991) and my Chapter Three for a similar discussion with respect to educational curricula.

> the juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as 'the subject' of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. And the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation. This becomes politically problematic ... (1990: 2).

Nevertheless, Butler also accepts the Derridean precept of 'nothing outside of discourse'. There is no supra-discursive location, or different, 'truer' epistemology on which basis we might generate a new vision of identity and identity politics that does not partake of the present relations of power. Again in contrast to Hartsock, Butler pinpoints feminist irresponsibility as residing not within deconstruction but in the utopian presumption that we can separate ourselves out from the discourse that produced 'ourselves' as a concept:

> if sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations, then the postulation of a normative sexuality that is 'before', 'outside', or 'beyond' power is a cultural impossibility and a politically impracticable dream, one that postpones the concrete and contemporary task of rethinking subversive possibilities for sexuality and identity with the terms of power itself (1991: 30).

The problems associated with Enlightenment epistemology cannot simply be swept away by calling upon a new concept or a new set of terms. Whatever different ways of thinking about identity we might construct have to be forged within, not outside of the discursive context in which the concept itself takes on meaning. What is required, then, is a redeployment of the dominant concepts *against themselves*: a radical subversion of the meanings ascribed to them -- and to our 'selves'. "There is only a taking up of the tools where they lie," she notes, "where the very taking up is enabled by the tool lying there" (1990: 145).

In Butler's view, this means that what resistance movements like feminism really need is neither a traditional 'subject' nor a new-and-improved one, but a rewriting of the concept altogether. 'Subjectivity' and 'agency', as well as assumptions about their necessary relationship must be demystified, or deconstructed. Butler proposes a reading of 'identity' as *practice* rather than essence. In this view, no set of essential subjective characteristics exists for identity politics to represent. Rather than passive descriptions of already constituted subjects, identity markers ('female'/ 'straight'/'lesbian', etc.) should be understood as performances of 'cultural intelligibility' within always, already predetermined discursivities. 'Identity' -- in the case of feminism, the category 'woman' -- is not something that we *are* and on the basis of which, we act in particular ways. On the contrary, Butler argues that it is our engagement in particular discursive practices which produces our identity as 'women'. She explains, "my argument is that there need not be a 'doer behind the deed', but that the doer is variably constructed in and through the deed" (1990: 142). 'Identity', then, does not require representation, but *is* it: "that [identity] is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (1990: 136).

This deconstruction of the concept of identity prepares the way for a new understanding of the linkage between subjectivity and agency. Butler suggest that we consider this linkage as oppositional rather than concomitant. If 'subjectivity' constitutes a set of cultural performances, the repetition of which maintains the coherence of particular discourses, then 'agency' in contrast may be understood as the subversive disruption of the repetition.[15] In contrast to the acquiescent performances of 'subjectivity', the 'agentic' gesture calls into question how one is expected to act within a given discourse. 'Agency' thus shatters the discursive pretence of naturality, making visible the possibility of transforming oppressive institutions. Butler observes,

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[15] Butler theorizes the interruption of discursive performances in terms of 'parody'. While central to her understanding of gender and the subversion of what she calls the 'heterosexual matrix', her valorization of parody (and 'drag') is less important in my discussion of her general argument. Briefly put, she claims that by mocking the notions of what is 'original' and 'natural', parodic performances destabilize gender norms to the extent that the concept of gendered identity itself is revealed as a construction: an effect of performances rather than their cause. That clothes (and other forms of body language) make the man -- and the woman -- she suggests, leads to the inevitable conclusion that gender is something we put on, or *do*, rather than something that we are.

> to understand identity as a practice and as a signifying practice is to understand culturally intelligible subjects as the resulting effects a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane signifying acts of linguistic life .... When the subject is said to be constituted that means simply that the subject is a consequence of certain rule-governed discourses that govern the intelligible invocation of identity. The subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is not a founding act but rather a regulated process of repetition that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects ... Agency is to be located within the possibility of a variation on that repetition ... (1990: 145).

By definition, then, the counter-discursive function of agency cannot be performed by the discursively-constituted 'subject'. Or rather, the performance of agency marks the moment of the de-construction of the subject. In this sense, the rejection of the notion of a core, natural, subjectivity and the recognition of its constructed character creates the necessary grounds for agency. Rather than instituting a foreclosure, the 'death of the subject' unharnesses the potential for effective, subversive, political action. Butler notes, "the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency. Or what is it that enables a purposive and significant reconfiguration of cultural and political relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked, resisted?" (1992: 12).

Having drawn a rough outline of the theoretical positions articulated by Hartsock and Butler, I would like now to draw some tentative conclusions. Despite their opposing viewpoints, both theorists appear to treat postmodernism with a remarkable absence of self-reflexivity. According to Hartsock, some foundational principle of identity, however qualified and tenuous, nevertheless is necessary to mount a politics of resistance. The argument is an exceedingly simple and convincing one: without a sense of identity, why would we both to challenge the subjugation of that identity? Butler's antifoundationist vision of feminist politics appears to fall prey to this form of critique. Without a core sense of self, what incentive is there to struggle over issues? To perform as a woman -- to wear a dress, for instance -- surely only becomes subversive or parodic through *intention*. Without some prediscursive identity, it is unclear how, or from where, such intention would arise. Butler thus leaves untheorized the practical starting position from which the disruption of identity-producing discursive 'performances' might be launched.

Hartsock's solution, however, of 'marked subjectivities', returns us to the dangerous essentialism against which Butler directs *her* critique. In maintaining the category of 'women' as the feminist point of departure, the constitutive nature of this subjectivity and its significations are left assumed and unproblematized. Under what circumstances and on the basis of which characteristics would an individual qualify or not as a subject marked 'woman'? How does the establishment of this identity participate in the discursive construction of power relations that govern the gender hierarchy? Viewed in this light, the divergent explanations of Hartsock and Butler end up appearing as only two halves of the same, circular argument. The two perspectives feed off each other in an endless, parasitical chain, and ultimately accomplish little in the way of resolving the serious questions posed by postmodernism.

If nothing else, this dilemma indicates the complexity of the debate, and the severity of the identity crisis postmodern philosophy presents to contemporary politics. To my mind, neither simple rejection nor embrace of postmodern philosophy is adequate to the task of developing a viable form of identity politics after the postmodern turn. A way out of the circle may be provided in the more qualified response expressed by the feminist psychoanalyst, Jane Flax.[16]

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[16] Flax is both a practicing psychoanalyst and a feminist professor of political science. Her psychoanalytic background clearly informs her reading of feminist and postmodernist approaches to the subject and politics (especially the 1990 text, *Thinking Fragments*, which is devoted to an analysis of the

JANE FLAX: REINVENTING FEMINISM

Nancy Hartsock provides an insightful critique of many of the weaknesses of postmodern approaches to politics, but does so from the vantage point of 'feminism', which goes unexamined. Judith Butler, in opposite fashion, interrogates 'feminism' from a postmodern, or (at least) poststructuralist perspective, taking the latter as given. What makes Flax's analysis more viable, in my view, is her refusal to take *either* discourse for granted. Flax reads postmodernism through the eyes of feminism, and likewise takes on feminism from the radical perspective of postmodernism. By identifying simultaneously as 'feminist' *and* 'postmodernist', she is able both to avoid the simplicity of binaristic reactions and to refuse the ('modernist') posture of 'the view from nowhere'. This self-reflexivity allows her to accomplish what Butler can only talk *about;* namely, a politically grounded, postmodern rejection of binaristic forms of oppositional critique.

In ontological terms, Flax argues against the postmodernist presumption that recognizing our subjectivities as totally constructed can set us 'free'. Drawing on her background as a psychoanalyst, she claims that for psychical reasons human beings *need* the sense of grounding which the concept of core, prediscursive selfhood provides. Moreover, she argues that without this 'deep' subjectivity, there is no way of engaging in the various acts of deconstruction, parody, refusal, or 'écriture' which postmodernism recommends. Like Hartsock, Flax is suspicious of the motives of "those who would deny the existence of subjectivity or outer reality constituted in part by nontexutal relations of domination" (1990: 219). At the same time, however, she does agree that the Enlightenment conception of the self as totally coherent and rational is a fiction, and furthermore, that this fiction has been applied inconsistently

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intersections of the three discourses). Nevertheless, because psychoanalytic theory will not be considered as a central factor in this thesis, for the most part I leave it out of my discussion of Flax's argument.

and repressively, to identify only a small, select group of the population while 'others' are relegated to the 'margins'. In addition, like Butler, she considers that external forces and circumstances rather than strictly an inner 'essence' construct the grounds upon which we take up existence as active social agents. Based on these assumptions, Flax recommends a compromise: a redefinition of subjectivity that would locate it somewhere between the natural unity assumed within modernist discourses and the absolute fragmentation described by postmodernism. Describing this vision of the subject, she notes,

> unlike the postmodernists' vision such a self would ... feel no need to forswear the use of logic, rational thought, or objectivity, although it might play with them. Neither would it lose itself and imagine the I to be merely the effect of thinking or language rather than also its cause. It would also know itself to be social, to be dependent for its existence on others. Yet at the same time it could experience itself as possessing an internal world that is never exactly like any other. It appreciates the fact that others also possess such a world. It could acknowledge the desire of its sexual aspect and the autonomy of desire and its objects .... To glimpse such a self is also to confront a paradox: it cannot fully exist within contemporary culture. The forces or repression here are not only within the individual, metaphysics metanarrative, or discursive formations but, in social relations as well ... The existence of asymmetric gender relations and the asymmetries of race encourage and reinforce the splitting off and disavowal of parts of the self. Homophobia is used to enforce repression of aspects of desire, sexuality and relations with others. These forces enter into and help structure our 'inner' world. Hence consideration of this multiple self, its absence, repression, and mutilation, pushes us 'outside' to take up existence as agents who can aggressively confront civilization and its discontents (1990: 219-220).

As I will discuss below, the critique of Enlightenment epistemology becomes Flax's central point of focus. Accepting the poststructural view of discourse, Flax maintains that neither truth nor knowledge ever exist within an acontextual vacuum, thus they are not usefully postulated as abstractions. Invoking Richard Rorty, she observes, "it will not help us to say something true to think about Truth, nor will it help to act well to think about goodness, nor will it help to be rational to think about rationality" (1990: 200). Postmodern deconstructions of epistemology present the best response to Enlightenment questions by refusing to engage in them altogether. These approaches, she notes, "do not intend to counterpose an alternative *philosophy* that would more 'adequately' 'solve' the problems of being, truth, or subjectivity. Rather they wish to persuade us not to ask the old questions anymore, to change the subjects of the conversation completely" (1990: 193). Instead of asking 'how do we know our feminist critique to be true', Flax encourages us to question 'what do we want -- and why'? If, as feminists, we are concerned about political transformation, then what we really seek to access is power, not truth. "Claims about domination," she observes, "are claims about *injustice* and cannot be given extra force or justification by references to Truth" (original emphasis; 1992: 459) Preoccupations with neutral 'truth' or 'justice' mask a 'dangerous will to innocence' (1992), Flax argues, that needs to be replaced with an attention to social responsibility. Thus in her view, political questions about knowledge are no longer viable without recourse to the normative.

As to this, Flax maintains that political movements like feminism should take heed of the postmodern critique of epistemology, while retaining their ('modernist') commitment to social emancipation. Feminism informed by postmodernism, then, would end its pretence of arguing on behalf of 'truth' (or as Hartsock puts it, 'truer' knowledge) and would begin to acknowledge its claims as demands for power.

I will take some time elaborating Flax's case and contrasting it to those articulated by Hartsock and Butler. I do so not only because I find her reading of the issues more carefully informed than the others' but also because it is the balanced development of her argument which makes her 'final' position most compelling. I look first at her feminist assessment of the values and weaknesses of postmodern approaches to understanding the self and sociality. Then I will turn to her postmodernist critique of feminism.

Generally speaking, Flax, like Hartsock, finds fault with several postmodern presuppositions. These concerns may be understood in terms of two, interrelated difficulties or contradictions. She notes first that, despite the claims of postmodern theorists to undermine the centrality of philosophical discourses in Western culture, 'philosophy' nevertheless retains a position of privilege within their analyses. In postmodern theory, Enlightenment philosophy is turned upside down -- it is attacked rather than celebrated -- but it is not displaced. Because the critique of philosophy remains at the focus in postmodern thought, in postmodern texts philosophy *does not* end up as any less central after the deconstruction than it was claimed to be before.[17]

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[17] A brief detour to consider Fraser and Nicholson's (1988) similar argument seems in order here, since they have most clearly demonstrated the possibilities for deconstructing the postmodern claims against the metanarrative. Lyotard's incredulity toward the metanarrative, they note, pertains not to its 'narrative status' but derives, rather, from his rejection of the notion of a privileged access to a transcendental 'Truth'. The metanarrative assumes a 'God's eye view' perspective for itself that is independent of historical and social contingencies. From this 'meta' standpoint, it claims the authority to evaluate all other 'first order' discourses which are the products of historical circumstance. It is this role of the metanarrative as the arbiter of legitimacy which Fraser and Nicholson understand Lyotard to reject: "we can no longer believe, he claims, in the availability of a privileged metadiscourse capable of capturing once and for all the truth of every first-order discourse. The claim to meta status does not stand up" (1988: 87).

From this, Lyotard proceeds to reject all historico-theoretical accounts of social organization, including especially those which critique the status quo. In their place he recommends a form of social criticism which is "local, ad hoc, and untheoretical" (1988: 90). Fraser and Nicholson observe that this postmodernist social criticism is simply not strong enough to respond to (or even to see) "macrostructures of inequality and injustice that cut across the boundaries which separate discrete practices and institutions" (1988: 88). They argue, "there is no place in Lyotard's universe for critique of pervasive axes of stratification, for critique of broad-based relations of dominance and subordination along lines like gender, race, and class" (1988: 88). They point out that, however, that according to his own argument, the problem with the metanarrative lies in its claims to 'meta status' and not in its claims to make history comprehensible and analysable. A rejection of the metanarrative *in toto* does not logically follow from such a critique. It could only come, rather, from a starting position that repudiates philosophy. Were postmodernism to start from the place where social criticism by rights *should* start, with the critique of current social structures, it would not need to reject the historical narrative. Moreover, it could not afford to do so, since the tools for theoretical analysis which grand theory provides are indispensable for active social critique.

For Fraser and Nicholson, this represents a contradictory leap (or breach) of faith on Lyotard's part which ultimately undermines his project. While postmodernism claims to celebrate a "more pragmatic, ad hoc, contextual, and local" (1988: 85) approach to social critique, Fraser and Nicholson observe that what is new about postmodern social theory has been triggered not by reflection upon the needs of marginalized communities but in response to poststructuralism's refutation of philosophy. From this, they argue that, under the postmodern conception, philosophy, even in its degraded state, retains "an implicit structural privilege ... (and continues to be) the independent variable, while social criticism

"Under the cover of 'displacement'...," she observes, "a traditional activity continues ..." (1990:194).

The postmodernists, Flax suggests, may have been more accurate than they realized in their denouncement of truth as a rhetorical product of discourse. For not only does postmodernism demonstrate the Enlightenment metanarrative to constitute just one possible story among several, but the critique of its centrality needs to be viewed as arbitrary as well. The history of Western culture, she claims, could be told in many different ways than as simply the history of philosophy. That it is portrayed as such by postmodern theorists is indicative of their own investment in a particular regime of truth. Although Derrida, for example, takes the domination of metaphysics as a given, it remains to be proven that anyone else but philosophers has experienced this apparently inescapable influence.

In Flax's view, this is what is most pernicious about postmodern theory: the elision of all social issues with the concerns of contemporary Western philosophers.[18] Postmodernism articulates a presumptuous 'we' that *we* should be suspicious of: is the need to break free of all aspects of the Enlightenment really 'our' most essential concern, or is it simply 'their's'? While postmodern arguments give voice to the notion of giving voice to 'others', most of the issues they raise -- about the hegemonic aspects of grammar and the like -- hold relevance strictly for those who developed the discourse.[19] The same holds true for their practices. Whereas earlier philosophers

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and political practice are dependent variables" (1988: 85). Reliant upon a critique of philosophy, rather than a critique of social structures, postmodern social criticism, then, is not what it seems. This contradiction holds important consequences for its political utility.

[18] Here a similar weakness is revealed in Flax's own argument. Because she sets up philosophy and philosophers as central to postmodern iconoclasm, and does not consider postmodern undertakings in other areas of cultural life, she makes it easier for herself than it may in fact be possible to tear the whole project down. If, for example, and as it has been argued 'postmodernism' (at least as opposed to poststructuralism) 'began' as a movement in Western *architecture*, Flax's criticisms are less applicable. I attempt to foreground this difficulty in my own work in Chapter One, Note 3. See Jencks (1992) for a guide to the debates surrounding postmodern theory in architecture. Jameson's analyses (1988, 1991) are good for situating architecture in the broad context of 'cultural capitalism'

[19] Carmen Luke (1992) notes a similar elision in critical theory. See my Chapter Four, Note 4.

'thought' and 'rationalized', the postmodernists 'write', 'converse' and give free 'play' to signification. Nevertheless, the rules for conducting such activities continue to be organized not by 'others' but by philosophers (1990: 192).[20]

This failure to make good on the promise of displacement and attention to the marginalized leads to the second aspect of Flax's critique. Here she takes feminist issue with some of the specific conceptualizations that postmodern theorists have developed.[21] In the main, she claims, postmodern theory has been blind and, in notable instances, even antagonistic to the lived experiences of women. Considering Foucault, for example, she argues that what his 'discovery' of 'bio-power' indicates, more than a 'new' and insidious form of modern governance, is a patent lack of awareness of women's social experiences and the work of feminist historians. She observes,

> [Foucault's] notion of biopower as a uniquely modern form of power runs contrary to many feminist accounts of history. According to these accounts, women's bodies have always, although in many different ways, been 'colonized' by the intersection of knowledge and power .... Perhaps what distinguishes modern culture is not the introduction of biopower per se, but rather the extensions of this power (in old and new forms) to different groups of men as well as women (1990: 212).

As for Derrida, she argues that his reformulation of 'woman' as 'other' participates in the consolidation rather than deconstruction of the logic of phallocentrism.[22] The notion that woman is 'outside' discourse is not an inescapable effect of the structure of language, she observes, but the result of a gendered social hierarchy in which women's agency and selfhood have been denied legitimacy. Language follows this repression; it does not 'produce' it. A truly radical deconstruction of the male/female binarism, therefore, would resituate 'man', for once, as the 'excess', the 'margin', or the '*supplément*" rather than reassign these non-agentic qualities yet again to 'woman'. She notes,

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[20] On this issue, she suggests, we should be wary of postmodernism's cooptative, or 'colonizing' aspect. Postmodernism celebrates 'subjugated knowledges' and cultures; it likes to read and write 'like a woman'. Under such circumstances, where the 'marginalized' suddenly is sought after, we should pay strict attention to *who* is enjoying 'black culture' or is reading 'like a woman,' and who remains stranded in the ghetto.

[21] Like other American critics, Flax tends to collapse the marker 'poststructuralism' into 'postmodernism', reading Lyotard, Rorty, Derrida, and Foucault alike as the 'major' 'postmodernist' proponents. As in my discussion of Hartsock, I stay mainly with her reading of the Europeans.

[22] Similar criticisms of the Derridean understanding of 'woman' , and its take-offs in literary criticism, of 'reading *like* a woman' (Culler 1982) have been mounted by theorists including Linda Alcoff (1988) and Tania Modleski (1986). For a good overview of the range of American positions on the issue, see Jardine and Smith (1987). In France, the tension is not so clear-cut. Certain French 'feminists', including Hélene Cixous, Catherine Clément, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, and others have, in different ways (a difference that is often overlooked in North American reactions to their work) accepted the notion of the non-being of 'woman', or the concept of her appearance as writing. Anti-'feminism" is therefore a notion they tend to

> stripped of its word play, its opaque, narcissistic rhetoric, Derrida's writings echo phallocentric metaphysics. Woman's 'style' is dangerous to culture because it has been outside it. Woman/writing/the other is thus the unthinkable, mystical, dionysian force outside or beyond time. She is the real, the disorder men have sought to both subdue and possess in the course of constructing rationality, truth and culture. In fact there is nothing new or 'postmodern' in such claims. What is still 'absent' (forbidden) is the incorporation of 'woman' qua embodied, desiring, and concrete and differentiated being(s) within culture, language, ruling or thinking *on our own terms* and not as man's other, "object of desire, 'or linguistic construct (1990: 215-216).

All this notwithstanding, Flax (this time unlike Hartsock) is not prepared to reject postmodern theory *in toto*. Which does not mean, that, like Butler, she is prepared to go along with postmodernism's complete reconstitution of sociality as a 'text' which merely needs to be 'read' differently. Rather, she proposes that feminists consider postmodernism as a valuable precautionary check on our overambitious claims to knowledge, truth, and especially, to innocence.

According to Flax, feminist theory carries out a tenuous existence on the border between postmodernism and modernism. As a critique of the exclusionary character of current social assumptions and institutions, feminism belongs within the

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embrace, viewing 'feminism' (as it has been understood within the Second Wave) as a cession to the patriarchal conventions of binaristic, hierarchical orders of power. Butler's 'feminist' argument, clearly, comes out of this tradition, rather than the conventional American perspective. For an introduction to French feminist thought, see Marks and de Courtivron (1981). For a recent American evaluation, see Fraser and Bartky (1992).

scope of postmodernist thought (1988: 622). As a liberationist project committed to social progress and human betterment, however, feminism also partakes of modernist presuppositions. As I noted above, Flax is critical of those postmodernists who would intercept feminism in its (modernist) project to dismantle "gender-based relations of domination" (1992: 459). Nevertheless, she argues, much of feminist theory has invested too much in modernist ideology. Succumbing to the Enlightenment prioritization of epistemology, many feminists assume that their political claims can be 'justified' on the basis of 'truth'.[23] In an implicit reference to Hartsock, she observes,

> many feminist theorists sustain the Enlightenment hope that it is possible to obtain 'better' knowledge and epistemologies. By better they mean (at minimum) knowledge and epistemologies less contaminated by false beliefs and dominating relations of power ... [These theorists believe that] power can be innocently or purely emancipatory; 'rational' power can be other than and not productive of new forms of domination. Such power can be neutral (it cannot hurts anyone) and transparent in its exercise and effects. Hence it is not really power at all ... (1992: 448).

In Flax's view, this recourse to epistemology must be regarded as a dangerous will to innocence that ultimately is inconsistent with feminist aims to dismantle oppressive regimes of truth. Following Foucault, she refuses the notion of neutral power, and likewise the possibility of an extra-contextual or prediscursive standard by which any of us (including feminists) might justify our position and our claims to power as universally valid, or 'innocent'. She argues moreover, and as I have noted above, that truth-claims are not what is at stake over issues of (gender) domination and repression:

> political action and change require and call upon many human capacities including empathy, anger, and disgust. there is no evidence that appeals to reason, knowledge, or truth are uniquely effective or ought to occupy privileged positions in strategies for change ... It is simply not

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[23] I make a similar argument concerning Henry Giroux's vision of 'critical pedagogy' in Chapter Three.

> necessarily the case (especially in politics) that appeals to truth move people to action, much less to justice (1992: 458).

The value of postmodernist theory, Flax suggests, resides in the limitations it exerts on this will to innocence. By revealing that truth is a discursive construct, postmodernism demands that we acknowledge our participation in relations of power and take responsibility for our political motivations as grounded on interest, not 'innocent' truth. Thus, while Hartsock accuses proponents of postmodernism of irresponsibly refusing to see the truth about material inequality, and Butler likewise accuses those who refuse the truth of the 'death of the subject', Flax shifts the terms of the debate around truth and responsibility altogether.

From Flax's postmodern standpoint, to paraphrase Jennifer Gore (1993: 64), 'interest' and the desire for power are not necessarily dangerous, but, rather, necessary. Even emancipatory projects must be seen as participating in not-always benevolent relations of power. What really *is* dangerous, however, is the drive to abdicate responsibility for our interests and the repercussions of acting upon them. She notes, "just because false knowledge can be utilized to justify or support domination, it does not follow that true knowledge will diminish it or that the possessor of 'less false' knowledge will be free from complicity in the domination of others" (1992: 459).

In the absence of the assured innocence provided by a universal standard of truth, we must therefore take care that our efforts toward emancipation are not replicating oppression elsewhere. The implications of postmodernism thus insist upon vigilant self-reflexivity in our self-described projects of 'liberation' and 'resistance'. These reflexive checks offer feminism the opportunity to rethink its relationship to power. 'What do we want?' and 'what is to be done?', Flax argues, are questions that cannot be posed without also asking, 'why?', and, 'at whose expense?'.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE: GESTURES OF DISPLACEMENT IN POSTMODERN FEMINISM

To raise these sorts of questions necessitates a reevaluation of the objectives of feminist struggles and to ask what the agenda of 'identity politics' should look like. Should the hierarchical, binaristic categorizations that posit 'subjects' and 'others' be displaced, as Nancy Hartsock suggests, by what I have termed 'incorporative opposition'? That is, should feminism be committed to the development of an ever-expanding subject category? Or should feminism define its goal as the subversion of the practice of categorization altogether? According to Judith Butler, this deconstructive approach constitutes the only effective means of extricating resistance movements from the cooptative aspect of contemporary hegemonic power structures. As I have attempted to indicate, neither of these approaches adequately untangles the complicated tension conditioned by poststructuralist theory and the postmodern turn.

Jane Flax's perception of identity politics and feminism is different. In her view, incorporative opposition and deconstruction both represent necessary but insufficient strategies for mounting resistance struggles with the postmodern 'end of innocence'. By exploding false binary oppositions, however, feminists are not left with solely 'either/or' alternatives with respect to politics and the 'death of the subject'. There is the possibility -- in fact it is a necessity -- rather, that feminism dialectically *combine* the displacement practices recommended by Hartsock and Butler. This double-coded approach would entail the development of a theory which argues on behalf of a feminist subject while simultaneously undercutting the essentialism and self-righteousness that subject-based politics have traditionally presupposed.[24] Instead of claiming

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[24] Mary Poovey (1988) argues similarly:

> real historical women have been (and are) oppressed, and the ways and means of that oppression need to be analyzed and fought. But at the same time, we need to be ready to abandon the binary thinking that has stabilized women as a group that could be

privileged insight to truth, Flax's vision of postmodern feminism would emphasize its own contingency and the partiality of its perspective.

Effectively, then, what she asks of feminism is to retain a sense of self while actively refusing to accept the conditions that have shaped it. Moreover, our sense of self should not discount the selves of others. This postmodern approach to identity politics requires profound courage. Without a foundation of 'truth', Flax appears to ask us to step out into the world, unsure that any ground will be there to support our feet. As Mary Poovey writes, "such a reconceptualization (of identity politics) ... would challenge the very basis of our current social organization. In so doing, it would necessarily feel like a loss, but it might also create the conditions of possibility for as yet unimaginable organizations of human potential" (1988: 60).

It appears, then, that rather than dismiss poststructuralism and postmodernism for infusing paralysis in aspiring emancipatory projects, and by the same token, rather than promoting them to such an extent that they cancel out our original political mandates, it might be better to consider these theories as signalling precaution: the 'sober second thought' of resistance. Poststructuralism reminds feminists of something we have already learned, but which, in our haste to change the world, it is all too easy to forget: the 'truth' that there is no position of innocence -- located neither 'nowhere' nor 'somewhere' -- from which we might irrefutably judge the rest of the world. We are always already inscribed and implicated within the power

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> collectively (although not uniformly) oppressed. I suggest then, that ... feminists need to do battle on two fronts. We must recognize that what (most) women now share is a positional similarity that masquerades as a natural likeness and that that has historically underwritten oppression, and we must be willing to give up the illusory similarity of nature that reinforces binary logic even though such a move threatens to jeopardize what seems 'special' about women ... We will need to turn from campaigns that reproduce the essentialism of sex difference to projects that call into question the very essentialism upon which our history has been based. In this sense, conceptualizing the issue in terms of real women is part of the solution, but it is also part of the problem (1988: 63).

structures of the social discourse we seek to change. In the next chapter, I bring this perspective to bear on the question of emancipatory education, or, 'critical pedagogy'.

CHAPTER THREE

BORDER CHECK: THE CASE OF CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

This is perhaps the principal reason why radical education as a field is so exciting: we can take ideas and apply them.
-- Henry Giroux, 1992.

My analysis so far has highlighted the crisis of identity which postmodern philosophy poses to feminist political discourses. Followed to their logical conclusions, the postmodern repudiation of the hegemonic status of the metanarrative and poststructuralist deconstruction -- with which feminism, as a counter-hegemonic, resistance movement ought presumably to agree -- present convincing arguments for the abandonment of the discipline of women-centered studies and the notion of the feminist subject altogether as consolidating and functional components of a 'regime of truth' (Foucault 1980:133).

Notwithstanding such debilitating implications, certain strands of feminism have claimed to adopt postmodernism and poststructuralism as *strategies* by which to advance a reorganized feminist political agenda. In this view, postmodernist and poststructuralist theories are understood as simply means for achieving unspecified ends. Judith Butler, for example, suggests that, "inasmuch as poststructuralism offers a mode of critique that effects [the] contestation of the foundationist move, it can be used as a part of a radical agenda. Note that I have said, 'it can be used'. I think there are no necessary political consequences for such a theory, but only a possible political deployment" (1992: 8). Likewise, Jennifer Gore and Carmen Luke note that in their work, "poststructuralist or postmodernist theoretical tenets have been helpful to the extent that they fit with our feminist political projects" (1992: 5).

While recuperating the use-value of postmodern and poststructuralist critique for feminist resistance, these assertions do demonstrate a remarkably positivistic treatment of post-positivism. In any case, if we accept such proposals for the time being, is it possible to extrapolate their formulations for 'education'/'pedagogy'? Would it be possible, for example, to separate the two terms, as the *field* of 'women's studies' might be separated from the *politics* of 'feminism'?[1] As with feminism, then, could one of the terms 'education' or 'pedagogy' come to signify an emancipatory politics that might employ the postmodern and poststructuralist techniques of 'unmasking', 'deconstruction', 'decentering', etc., for the development of democratic social forms?

Given the contemporary theoretical climate, this idea is not without its appeal. The awareness of the non-neutrality of knowledge propels education to the center of postmodern cultural struggles -- a new and not so easily navigated terrain. As the conscious production of not only knowledgeable but also political subjects (Giroux 1991c: 47), pedagogy must be understood, as Robert Con Davis urges,

> fundamentally as a situated cultural practice whose effects are learning only insofar as 'learning' itself is seen in ideological terms -- as having a political impact. All knowledge in other words, does something to someone, benefits and oppresses, empowers some and deprives others -- exists, in short, as a dimension of work with an effect in the world (1987: 207).

In the present chapter I investigate this issue, focussing on the relationship between between postmodernism and and the educational theory of Henry Giroux. Since the late 1980's, Giroux's work has increasingly represented the practice of pedagogy as the essential vehicle for actualizing the political potential suggested by postmodern social theory. In his 1991 text with Stanley Aronowitz, *Postmodern*

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[1] In some circles, of course, the split presupposed by this analogy is highly controversial. Could one, goes the argument, -- or the more pertinent question -- *would* one 'do' women's studies from a non-feminist perspective? In my view, the answer is clearly yes: we have only to consider Freud.

Education, Giroux formalized his argument under the theory of a 'border pedagogy of postmodern resistance'.

Giroux's fluency in the postmodernist discourses outside the parameters of education is enviably lucid.[2] Moreover, his conceptualization of canonical influence in the production of school generated knowledge and his calls for a reorganized anti-canonical curricula make postmodern 'sense'. Nevertheless, I will argue that a self-reflexive blindspot is discernable in Giroux's elaboration of critical pedagogical *practice* that ultimately disables his efforts to conjoin the Enlightenment discourse of education with postmodern scepticism.

In my view, this tension over self-reflexivity mirrors a similar difficulty in certain feminist encounters with postmodernism. While feminist theorist Nancy Hartsock and Giroux differ in their evaluations of the ultimate political value of most postmodern philosophical assumptions, their underlying presuppositions can be seen as basically the same.[3] Both subscribe to an Enlightenment vision of emancipation which justifies claims to authority in the name of reason. I have discussed in Chapter Two the danger which this self-critical absence suggests for feminist politics and the dismantlement of patriarchal gender relations. In the case of education, the viability of politically transformative pedagogy hangs in the balance between the educator's 'will to truth' and the modesty of poststructural self-critique. In light of my discussion of feminism, an investigation into Giroux's unwillingness -- or inability -- to extricate critical pedagogy from the presumptions of Enlightenment thought may help to uncover the nature of this tension and point to a possible resolution.

So as to locate 'border pedagogy' in its historical and intellectual context, I begin with a quick 'geneology' of the theoretical developments within the discipline of sociology of education since the 1970's. I then turn to outline the major components of resistance education as they were initially articulated by the critical pedagogy theorists. Giroux's work from 1988 to 1992 serves as the specific point of departure for my analysis of the relationship between postmodernism and education. I look first at Giroux's 'postmodern' reorganization of school curricula, which, as I have noted, appears to negotiate successfully the complicated theoretical turns presented by postmodern philosophy. Then I examine Giroux's conception of the 'teacher-intellectual' who would impart the reformulated curriculum. I suggest that it is over the issue of teacher authority that Giroux's postmodern pedagogical project runs aground. To analyse this contradiction, I draw in considerable measure from Michel Foucault's poststructuralist understanding of intellectuals, power, and truth. As noted above, I conclude with a comparison of feminist and pedagogical responses to postmodern theory.

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[2] Giroux's overviews of postmodern theory provide an excellent introduction to the broad debates over Western politics and culture. See Aronowitz and Giroux (1991) and Giroux (1990, 1992).

[3] See my Chapter Two for a detailed discussion of Hartsock's argument.

SITUATING THE DISCOURSE: ENTER EDUCATION

> *In redefining the nature of educational theory, the struggle will not be over the use of data or types of studies conducted. The real battle will be over the theoretical frameworks in use, for it is on the contested terrain of theory that the debate needs to be conducted.*
> -- Henry Giroux, 1983.

Sometimes following, sometimes diverging from social and intellectual developments in other disciplines, sociological studies in education have undergone three distinct 'paradigm shifts' since the early 1970's.[4] With the appearance of M.F.D. Young's *Knowledge and Control* (1971), the 'New' Sociology of Education emerged as a phenomenological challenge to structural-functionalist analyses of schooling in the 1950's and 1960's. Against the view of schools as transmission sites for socialization, and the understanding of students as passive receptacles for predetermined curricula,[5] the New sociology of education emphasized student agency and lived experience in the production of school knowledge and the generation of social norms.

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[4] Philip Wexler (1987) provides a detailed historical analysis of the development of sociological study in the context of education. See also Aronowitz and Giroux (1985) Giroux and Penna (1987), Luke (1992), Gore (1993), and Karabel and Halsey (1977).

While the emphasis on the social construction of reality provided an important corrective to the positivism of structural functionalism, the 'first wave' of New sociology of education was hampered by a narrow focus on classroom interaction. The neglect of the question of power and the absence of attention paid to the larger political and economic contexts in which schools operate left the field open to critique by radical neo-Marxist sociologists. These 'second wave' theorists emphasized the function of education in 'reproducing' the ideologies, values and class-stratification which characterize modern Western capitalist societies.

The first and most influential model of reproduction theory, associated with the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976), takes a political-economy approach in analysing the relationship between schools and society. In their studies Bowles and Gintis pointed to a structural and ideological 'correspondence' between the social dynamics of the public school classroom and the capitalist marketplace. They first demonstrated that the sets of knowledge, skills, and credentials which schools distribute to students of different class backgrounds is regulated to mirror the extant conditions of the social division of labour. Students from lower classes are systematically channelled into scholastic streams where they will acquire the skills or labour power suited to lower class occupations. Middle and upper class students receive a more intellectually rigorous education which prepares them for managerial and administrative positions in the work force. This class-stratification through schooling is generally conducted without recourse to the 'natural' abilities of the students. Bowles and Gintis also argued that schools inculcate students with attitudes and dispositions necessary to accept the conditions of inequality produced by a capitalist economy. These two 'correspondences' are linked through the notion of the 'hidden curriculum'.

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[5] Within this conception, which Freire (1971) described as 'banking education', students are seen as empty vessels at best (and full of 'wrong' knowledge, at worst), to be filled up with the 'legitimate' knowledge provided through the educational institution. This assessment is closely in line with the feminist critique of Western binaristic thought, which presumes the oppositional associations of *complete/knowledge/culture/public/teacher/male* on the one hand and *void/ignorance/nature/student/female* on the other.

The 'hidden curriculum' refers to unspoken messages embodied within classroom social relations that legitimize those perceptions of work and authority which support capitalist logic and instrumental rationality. The methodical regulation of classroom space and personal behavior and the rewarding of the competitive impulse are all aspects of the hidden curriculum. Through these scholastic rituals, students are conveyed a set of subtle and not-so subtle rules for conducting social relations under a capitalist economy. Aronowitz and Giroux observe,

> the social relations that constitute the hidden curriculum provide ideological and material weight to questions regarding what counts as high versus low status knowledge (intellectual or manual), high versus low status forms of social organization (hierarchical or democratic), and, of course, what counts as high versus low status forms of personal interaction (interaction based on individual competitiveness or interaction based on collective sharing) (1985: 75).

Bowles and Gintis's view of the 'hidden curriculum' is closely related to Althusser's (1971) conception of ideology and the 'ideological state apparatus'. Althusser also viewed schools as the site for reproducing the skills of capitalist labour power (through the formal curriculum) and the social relations of production (through the hidden curriculum). His theory is distinguished from Bowles and Gintis with respect to the level of consciousness at which the hidden curriculum is understood to operate. According to Althusser, the hidden curriculum works by structuring the *unconscious* of students and teachers such that they develop an 'imaginary' relationship with, or acceptance of, the economic and political conditions of inequality in which they live.[6] As 'ideological state apparatuses', then, schools not only reproduce the class-stratification of the status quo, but quell antagonistic reactions against it. In Althusser's view, this function reduces the need for the state to engage the 'repressive apparatuses' -- police, military, and prisons -- in maintaining the social stability necessary for continued capitalist accumulation.

Theorists of the cultural-reproductive model, while similarly concerned with the nature of capitalist social reproduction, aimed to shift the terms of analysis from economic inequality to the political relationship between culture and domination. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) articulated this relationship through the concept of 'cultural capital'.[7] By 'cultural capital' they referred to the sets of class-mediated, linguistic and symbolic competencies that individuals acquire from their family of origin. Schools 'reproduce' the class distinctions of cultural capital by rewarding those students who reflect the linguistic style, bodily posture and other symbolic customs associated with the ruling classes. Upper class students thus enjoy a distinct advantage over students who bring different and devalued 'cultural capital' to school. These 'others' must struggle not only to achieve intellectual accreditation, but the physical, attitudinal, and sensory attributes that appear to come 'naturally' to the upper classes. In Bourdieu's work, as Aronowitz and Giroux note, the "politicization of school knowledge, culture, and linguistic practices formulates a new discourse for examining ideologies embedded in the formal school curriculum. Similarly, Bourdieu adds a new dimension to analyses of the hidden curriculum by focusing on the importance of the body as an object of learning and social control" (1985: 83).

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[6] Althusser's usage of the 'imaginary' is Lacanian. Ideology, like language, mediates between individuals and their experiences, assigning meaning. Ideology 'interpellates' the subject, or seems to summon her personally, so that she assumes herself to be the author of the meanings it produces. As Weedon notes, the interpellated subject "speaks or thinks as if she were in control of meaning ... she imagines that she is indeed the type of subject which humanism proposes: rational, unified, the source rather than the effect of language (1987: 29).

[7] For a different perspective on the cultural-reproductive model, see Bernstein (1977).

The social reproduction theorists have been instructive in drawing attention to the relationship between the institution of education and the capitalist context in which it is positioned. The view of schools as equal, co-participants with students in the production of social reality has been replaced by a realization of schooling's non-innocent role in socializing individuals to accept conditions of inequality. Nevertheless, the Marxian class preoccupation in these analyses occluded examination of the effects of other forms of domination, including race, gender, and sexuality. Moreover, they appeared to remove the possibility of human agency and resistance from the sociological equation and with it, the hope that changes to an unjust system could ever be effected. As Connell observes,

> if inequality was ordained by the structures, just what exactly (could be done)? Teachers can't overthrow the whole economic and political system: the kind of social theory that lay behind 'reproduction' arguments was ... too rigid and too pessimistic (1982: 28).

In the early 1980's, the pessimism of reproduction theory in education was countered by the call for an 'emancipatory curriculum' and a 'language of hope' by 'resistance,' or 'critical pedagogy' theorists (Aronowitz and Giroux 1985, 1991; Giroux 1981, 1983, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c, 1989, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d; McLaren, 1989, 1991). In perhaps his most succinct and coherent passage, Giroux sums up the following as the 'critical pedagogy' manifesto:

> as a form of engaged practice, critical pedagogy calls into question forms of subordination that create inequities among different groups as they live out their lives. Likewise, it rejects classroom relations that cause difference to be seen as an object of condemnation and oppression, and it refuse to subordinate the purpose of schooling to narrowly defined economic and instrumental considerations. This is a notion of critical pedagogy that equates learning with the creation of critical citizens, rather than merely good ones. This is a pedagogy that links schooling to the imperatives of democracy, views teachers as engaged and transformative intellectuals, and makes the notion of democratic difference central to the organization of curriculum and development of classroom practice (1991a: 118).

Rather than organizing a compromise between the first two movements of the sociology of education, the 'radical' theorists turned to Freirian pedagogy, Frankfurt School critical theory, and Gramscian conceptions of hegemony and the 'organic intellectual' in their efforts to produce a new and utilizable discourse of 'transformative' education. With the introduction of new theoretical understandings of social formations, analytical emphasis in this 'third wave' of sociology of education shifted from the critique of ideology and structure to reconceptualizations of agency and the productive capacities of power (Gore 1993: 96). The Marxist assumption that progressive educational changes could only result from the complete revolution of the state was rejected in favour of a new conceptualization of schooling as a site for potential political resistance, with pedagogy understood as a causal mode of transformative practice for democracy.

The possibilities for interrupting social reproduction have been theorized variously in the discourse as 'conscientization', 'cultural literacy' (Freire 1971; 1985), 'critical literacy' (Giroux 1988b), or 'peace education' (Floresca-Cawagas and Toh 1989). For Giroux, the aim to develop critical literacy assumes education's status as the "analytical connection between 'knowledge' and 'power,' between the material force of an historical moment and the 'understood' or theorized, event" (1991b: 93). Counter-hegemonic, pedagogical practices and curricula in the classroom can produce a safe, democratic environment for students to engage with others in the critique of unjust assumptions and social practices, and to refuse the exclusive and excluded positions allocated to different individuals. Through these experiences of empowerment, students can develop the confidence and the motivation to create, at first simply within their classrooms, and then later in the larger global community, a safe, validating, peaceful and just society to live in. To this end, Floresca-Cawagas and Toh explain that,

> peace education encourages all students and citizens to engage in personal action and social action which can transform their society and the world toward more just, compassionate, sharing and nonviolent structures, institutions, communities, families, and individuals (1989: 13).

The critical pedagogy literature promotes the development of 'authentic' dialogue, the encouragement of student voice, the presentation (in the sense of making present) as opposed to representation (in the sense of making objective) of the perspectives and knowledges of those silenced under the dominant discourse, and with this, the notion of subjective experience as a valid critique of 'objective,' authoritative, textbook knowledge. Steering this new, transformative mode of education is the 'teacher-intellectual' who can provide students with a language of critique in which to interrogate the biased and unjust structural components of their society and the epistemological foundations upon which these are based. 'Pedagogy' in this sense becomes teaching how to read, as Freire puts it, not only the word but also the world (Freire 1986: 44).

SITUATING THE DISCOURSE: ENTER POSTMODERNISM

The postmodern disenchantment with the hegemonic function of reason and poststructuralist analyses of discursive practices in the production of 'power/knowledge' have heightened the significance of the questions raised by critical pedagogy. Giroux notes, "the challenge of postmodernism is important for educators because it raises crucial questions regarding certain hegemonic aspects of modernism and, by implication, how these have affected the meaning and dynamics of present-day schooling" (1991d: 58). For educators committed to political transformation, recognition of the embedded location of pedagogy in the discursive organization of power necessitates the generation of alternative strategies for preparing students to cope with, and hopefully to democratize, the postmodern condition of their lives.

The 'postmodern' entry point for interrupting social reproduction and transforming structural apparatuses which operate in support of oppressive social relationships is a reorganization of the ever-contested terrain of school curricula. The relationship between school curricula and the value ascribed to specific forms of knowledge is a dialectically productive one. While what gets taught in public education institutions surely mirrors the political ideology of dominant culture, schools should not be understood simply as passive conduits for the transmission of cultural and social norms. Through their presentation of particular curricular discourses and epistemologies as socially legitimate, schools also function as active participants in the construction of meaning-systems which regulate relations between knowledge, significance and desire.

Considering this relationship, Giroux argues that changes to *how* and to *what* students are taught can effect changes to the way they think about themselves and the world. This function of schooling is eminently political in nature:

> what is at stake in the struggle over curriculum and textual authority is the struggle to control the very grounds on which knowledge is produced and legitimated. This is both a political and pedagogical issue. It is political in that the curriculum, along with its representative courses, texts, and social relations, is never value-free or objective. Curriculum, by its very nature, is a social and historical construction that links knowledge and power in very specific ways (1991b: 96).

Disrupting the pride of place assigned to traditional scholastic subjects as the standards of truth may enable students to think outside or 'beyond' the power/knowledge constellations imposed by the dominant culture. This hope of 'thinking beyond' (Giroux 1989: 133) concretizes the possibilities for the construction of what Giroux, following Laclau and Mouffe (1985), describes as a 'radical democratic public sphere', incorporating the 'best insights of modernism and postmodernism' (1991a: 117). To this end, Giroux opts to rename the discourse 'border pedagogy' to denote a radical educational practice for a postmodern scene:

> border pedagogy offers the opportunity for students to engage the multiple references that constitute different cultural codes, experiences, and language. This means educating students to read these codes critically, to learn the limits of such codes, including the ones they use to construct their own narratives and histories. Partiality becomes, in this case, the basis for recognizing the limits built into all discourses, and necessitates taking a critical view of authority. Within this discourse, students must engage knowledge as border-crossers, as people moving in and out of borders constructed around coordinates of difference and power. These are not only physical borders, they are cultural borders: historically constructed and socially organized within maps of rules and regulations that limit and enable particular identities, individual capacities, and social forms. In this case, students cross over into realms of meaning - maps of knowledge, social relations, and values that are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten as the codes and regulations that organize them become destabilized and reshaped. Border pedagogy decenters as it remaps. The terrain of learning becomes inextricably linked to the shifting parameters of place, identity, history and power (1991a: 118-119).

In the following sections, I consider the implications posed by Giroux's argument for 'border pedagogy'.

GESTURES OF DISPLACEMENT IN THE POSTMODERN CURRICULUM

In Chapter One I began to outline what I see as the distinction between 'incorporative opposition' and 'deconstruction' as strategic gestures for the displacement of the meta-status of hegemonic discourses. In Chapter Two I returned to this distinction as a way of delineating competing strands of feminist identity politics following the postmodern turn. I have found this distinction instructive once again in the present context for drawing out the implications stemming from Giroux's postmodern review of school curricula.

To reiterate, the 'incorporative oppositional' gesture of displacement is aimed to decenter the authority of metadiscourses by making visible the proliferation of possible alternative discourses. Just as an increase to the number of variables destabilizes the set, recognition of 'other' voices is expected to knock the 'central' discourse out of place. The 'deconstructive' move follows a different logic. Rather than shifting the metanarrative out of its central position through the introduction of competing discourses, deconstruction proceeds by critically undermining the category of centrality altogether. By exposing within metanarrative claims to autonomy a contradictory reliance upon precisely those 'false' epistemological elements which it understands itself to eschew, the deconstructive gesture unravels the notion of 'centrality,' designating it ultimately as 'undecidable'.

For theorists concerned with praxis, these two strategies appear to hang suspended in a dialectical tension. Incorporative opposition is criticized for aiming simply to replace one set of truth claims with another.[8] The deconstructive gesture, while apparently avoiding this criticism, falls prey to its complement.[9] Mired in the language of critique, the deconstructive theorist is dispossessed of any means of proposing a positive, alternative political agenda which does not participate in replicating the previous hegemonic structure.

Tony Whitson's (1991) cogent assessment of the strategies of displacement in a hegemonic social order provides an excellent introduction for examining the dimensions of the problematic both in general terms and for the case of schooling. Considering studies of modern ideological formations, Whitson privileges poststructuralist modes of social analysis which theorize the organization of social norms in terms of structural reliances on sets of dichotomous hierarchies.[10] In Whitson's view, poststructuralist analyses most adequately reveal the capacity of dominant ideological systems to enclose their opponents inside the social matrix in complementary binaristic locations which not only neutralize the impact of oppositional arguments, but functionally integrate them as reinforcing components of the system.[11] In light of this "distinctive characteristic of hegemony" (1991:79), Whitson is sceptical about the potential for 'postmodern' oppositional movements, including revalorizations of 'the body', marginalized histories and mass culture, to significantly reshape the political contours of social institutions. It is not sufficient, he argues, that transformative political efforts simply expand prevailing structures so as to include 'others' within predetermined relations of oppression. The project of 'truly counter hegemonic' politics must be directed toward the dismantlement of such binaristic structures altogether.

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[8] This movement toward replacement of truth claims without radical transformation of the political system in which they are articulated is a criticism I make of Nancy Hartsock's feminist project in Chapter Two.

[9] The observation has been made that the deconstructive method becomes a *grand recit* itself, by promoting deconstruction as the sole accurate means for gaining insight to truth. See Whitson (1991: 75) and below.

[10] Whitson points to the work of Derrida and Foucault as exemplary of the poststructuralist study of binary oppositions. See my Chapter One for a discussion of these concepts.

Turning to educational practices, Whitson identifies strategies for radical curricular reorganization under the headings of 'postmodern' and 'poststructural', where 'postmodern' denotes the practice of incorporative opposition, and 'poststructural' curricula indicates a deconstructive approach to school-sanctioned knowledge. Given the forcefulness of current assumptions about what 'counts' as knowledge, Whitson suggests that the 'postmodern' emphasis on introducing oppositional discourses into the curriculum is unlikely either to displace traditional scholastic focuses or to generate a counter-hegemonic perspective among students and teachers. On the contrary, he warns that the 'postmodern' incorporative curricula may inadvertently assist in bolstering dominant paradigms by offering themselves up as the complementary 'others' to the traditional curricular 'subjects'. Rather than simply providing 'oppositional' alternatives, a 'truly counter-hegemonic' curriculum base requires the radical deconstruction of those extant epistemological oppositions which support the conception of curricular authority itself.[12] Whitson observes,

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[11] Citing Stott, Whitson notes the suggestion that leftist criticism can be read as functionally supportive of the hegemonic order "in a more convincing way than the dominant groups could ever do without their opposition, by demonstrating to the public that even its critics can come up with no viable superior alternative" (1991: 79). Given the contemporary political climate, it is probably realistic for him to identify 'the left' with this form of cooptable 'opposition'. It is worth noting, however, that Marx's own analyses of capital were organized with a critical perspective similar to that called for by Whitson. I have analysed the resemblance between deconstruction and the Marxian analysis of capitalism in an unpublished paper (1991).

> it is tempting to argue for the value of 'practical' subjects, popular culture, and the body, in opposition to the prevailing higher valorization of "academic" subjects, "high" culture, and the mind. We need to beware, however, of the trap that we are being baited into here. We are being tempted to enter such disputes as they have already been constructed within the hegemonic order. Oppositional *postmodernist* rationales would be helpful in supporting curriculum choices that include a broader range of voices and life interests, in preference to a more exclusive emphasis on academics". A *post-structuralist* perspective, however, would reveal the need to repudiate this representation of the options altogether, and provide the deconstructive means to subvert the false and violent dichotomies embedded in the hegemonic structure which supports such representations (original emphasis; 1991: 81).

Whitson may be right that oppositional curricula is likely to remain side-lined under hegemonic social regimes. The assumption, however, that a deconstructive response alone offers an adequate antidote to hegemony, is unsatisfactory. Practically speaking, it leaves the teacher with very little left to teach. In theoretical terms, and as Whitson himself observes, this response replicates the posture of the metanarrative as providing sole access to 'truth'. In my view, the argument marshalled against oppositional political and pedagogical movements, including the development of oppositional curricular programs and materials, needs to be complemented by a self-reflexive scepticism toward its own 'will to truth.'

Disputes over the definitive signification of the terms 'postmodern' and 'poststructuralist' seem to miss the basic import of the discourse and are not arguments in which I am prepared to engage. Nevertheless, it does bear pointing out that most elaborations of the 'poststructural' deconstruction Whitson privileges for its subversive effects also include arguments for 'incorporative opposition'. Derrida's principle of *différance,* for example, includes the two, dialectically related gestures of

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[12] Drawing the distinction between 'multicultural' and 'anti-racist' education, Madan Sarup (1991) levels an even stronger critique of the incorporative curriculum. See below.

(oppositional) 'reversal' and (deconstructive) 'displacement'. Derrida notes the danger in 'bypassing' the phase of reversal in the effort to hasten critical transformation:

> to deconstruct the opposition, first of all, is to overturn the hierarchy at a given moment. To overlook this phase of overturning is to forget the conflictual and subordinating structure of opposition. Therefore one might proceed too quickly to a neutralization that in practice would leave the previous field untouched, thereby prventing any means of intervention in the field effectively. We know what always have been the practical (particularly political) effects of immediately jumping beyond oppositions, and of protests in the simple form of neither this nor that (1981: 41).

Thus it appears that hegemonic curricular forms, like the structures of patriarchy assessed within feminism, must be displaced through a simultaneous combination of *both* incorporative opposition *and* deconstruction. Returning to Giroux's curricular proposal for a 'border pedagogy of postmodern resistance, it seems to me that that his theory is successful in addressing, if not completely fulfilling, this dialectical requirement. In the following sections I discuss his call for the development of a wider range of curricular discourses as well as the subversion of the traditional status of curricular categories themselves.

BORDER PEDAGOGY: INCORPORATIVE OPPOSITION

Inspired by Foucauldian 'archaeology' and postmodern revalorizations of disestablished epistemologies and modes of representation, border pedagogy begins with the gesture of 'incorporative opposition'. Under Giroux's plan, traditionally subordinate issues and perspectives -- including the histories, languages and cultural artefacts of marginalized groups, as well as facets of popular culture and the study of mass media technology -- would be introduced as relevant objects of scholastic investigation:

> border pedagogy incorporates the postmodern emphasis on criticizing official texts and using alternative modes of representation (mixing video, photography, and print). It also incorporates popular culture as a serious object of politics and analysis, and makes central to its project the recovery of those forms of knowledge and history that characterize alternative and oppositional Others (1991: 119).

Madan Sarup (1991) notes that within certain versions of 'multicultural' curricula the pedagogical imperative is directed simply toward the encouragement of a liberal appreciation for cultural idiosyncracies. The structural scaffolding of political and economic domination remains uninvestigated and uncriticized in these programs, leading Sarup to read them as implicitly supportive of the social status quo:

> multicultural education ('lots of steel bands and sports') focuses on ... life styles -- the appreciation of other cultures -- and not on political processes and economic structures.... much of this 'soft' multicultural education is tokenistic, but it is more than that, as it is involved in an ideological struggle it actually tries to prevent radical social change .... multicultural education, in brief, is a sophisticated form of social control and it has the effect of keeping black resistance in check. Its aim is to prevent basic changes in the power structure of society (1991: 30-31).

Border pedagogy in contrast emphasizes cultural and social 'others' with a view toward radical political transformation. In Giroux's version, a postmodern-inspired incorporative curricula draws out for interrogation the incomplete and exclusionary nature of standard Enlightenment conceptualizations of 'legitimate' knowledge:

> by offering a theoretical language for establishing new boundaries with respect to knowledge most often associated with the margins and the periphery of the culturally dominant, postmodern discourses open up the possibility for incorporating into the curriculum a notion of border pedagogy in which cultural and social practices need no longer be mapped or referenced solely on the basis of the dominant models of Western culture (1991a: 120).

In a critical classroom, exposure to this tension should empower students to develop the skills to recognize and refuse ideological obstructions to the formation of a radical democratic polity.[13] For Giroux, these include most specifically, justifications for the systematic equation of cultural 'difference' with political and economic disempowerment.

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[13] See below for a discussion of Mouffe's view of radical democracy.

This process of postmodern consciousness-raising is theorized as taking two important directions. First, as indicated, the presentation of epistemologies and representational forms emanating from the margins of dominant culture (1991a: 120) sets up a context for students to analyse critically and rewrite the biased assumptions of those -- both inside the classroom and beyond -- who have enjoyed privileged status within the traditional social hierarchy. Likewise, the incorporative curriculum creates spaces in classroom discussion for students, whose social and cultural subject positions have marked them as 'other,' to rename themselves as active participants in the production of culture. Giroux describes this aspect of the postmodern curriculum as providing "the crucial conditions by which subordinate individuals and groups reclaim their own memories, stories and histories as part of an ongoing attempt to challenge those power structures that attempt to silence them" (1991b: 101). This twofold potential to recover lost voices and to critique dominating ideologies is underscored in his most recent text:

> as a form of social-memory, (the curriculum of border pedagogy) .... reclaims the historical and the popular a part of an ongoing effort to critically appropriate the voices of those who have been silenced and to help move the voices of those who have been located within narratives that are monolithic and totalizing beyond indifference or guilt to emancipatory practice (1992: 76).

Accepting the understanding that subjective and social consciousnesses are shaped by prevailing linguistic formations, Giroux believes the possibility of contemplating and articulating radically different forms of democratic public life requires a reconstructed organization of current signs and meaning-systems. Accordingly, in his description of the critical pedagogical mandate he mobilizes the metaphor of new 'languages': "critical education operates on two basic assumptions:

there is a need for a language of critique and that there is a need for a language of possibility: going beyond critique to elaborate a positive language of human empowerment" (1992: 10). By presenting challenges to the received Western understandings of the world and ideals of 'truth' and 'justice', the postmodern curriculum of border pedagogy provides the necessary vehicle for devising these new languages of critique and 'hope'. Within these languages students and citizens of the wider community are empowered to

> question public forms, address social injustices and break the tyranny of the present ... teachers (also) need a language of imagination, one that insists on consideration of the critical means for developing those aspects of public life that point to its best and as yet unrealized possibilities, and acts to enable such consideration (1991b: 109).

BORDER PEDAGOGY: DECONSTRUCTION

As Whitson has indicated, the vision of a postmodern reinscription of school-sanctioned knowledge is not particularly unique. Other educational theorists have also argued for the presentation of subordinate fields of study within public school curricula. In my view, what is special about Giroux's proposal is its apparent capacity to resist hegemonic cooptation. This feature comes to light most clearly in Giroux's discussions of the category of curricular canons. Speaking of the installation of 'cultural studies' as a scholastic subject, Giroux notes the dangerous implications of an uncritical reconstitution of 'legitimate' scholastic knowledge. Without concomitant deconstruction of the hierarchical binarisms that support the authority of the 'canon' itself, curricular reorganization runs the risk of simply filling old forms of canonical domination with new, 'oppositional' content. In this case, the structures of discursive oppression are reversed, but not displaced:

> the humanist rationale for the canon is based on a hierarchical economy where cultural objects are ranked .... The installation of a new canon

> constructed on assumptions about what is most important and valuable for students to know or be familiar with merely replicates the traditional hierarchical view of culture, albeit in a novel and perhaps minimally subversive way (1988b: 149).

In developing postmodern curricular 'counter-texts', then, radical educators must be vigilant of the structural propensity for officially sanctioned knowledges to acquire hegemonic status. Giroux elaborates on this issue in his most recent work, calling for a dialectical approach to curriculum development that includes *both* the incorporation of oppositional content *and* the radical deconstruction of the signification of 'canons' altogether: "this is not merely an argument against a canon, but one that refigures the meaning and use of canon. Knowledge has to be constantly re-examined in terms of its limits and rejected as a body of information that only has to be passed down to students" (1992: 75-76).

Under a border pedagogy formulation, then, educators assign themselves the difficult and seemingly paradoxical task of resituating marginalized discourses as central to academic curricula *while at the same time* launching a critique of the status of centrality associated with school knowledge itself. Giroux notes, border pedagogy requires "taking new (i.e. necessarily noncanonical) objects and implicating them in a relational rather than hierarchical view [that] encourages a questioning of the premises of dominant educational and political practices" (1988c: 150). Border pedagogy's incredulity toward the authority of school-sanctioned knowledge refers not only to standard curricular subjects but to its own postmodern offerings as well. By self-critically interrupting the discourse of curricular authority, border pedagogy does not aim simply to 'compete' against the more legitimate curricular subjects: it refuses the terms of the competition altogether.

Foucault demonstrated that power exists only inside discourse. Relations of power are constituted between subjects who agree upon the meanings assigned to whatever terms may be at stake. Power is eliminated, becomes meaningless itself, when this discursive agreement (called 'knowledge') is shattered. The counter-discursive stance adopted within border pedagogy should enable this form of oppositional curricula to avoid the fate of hegemonic side-lining diagnosed by Whitson. By actively disengaging from the values assigned under curricular hierarchies, border pedagogy resists positioning as complementary 'other' to more 'legitimate' curricular projects. This complicated proposal, more than most educational responses to postmodernist theory, reflects a serious engagement with the complexities of the power/knowledge conjugation. Nevertheless, difficulties remain in Giroux's vision of how his theoretical postmodern curriculum would be practically implemented.

I stated above that Giroux 'renames' his theory rather than 'refigures' it, with purpose. Giroux would have the postmodern educator jettison dutifully the status of the curricular canon. The postmodern requirement to problematize the authority of the teacher as well, however, appears to threaten the total bankruptcy of the educational enterprise, leaving the pedagogical theorist with nothing to do. This is a move which Giroux, committed as he is to education's emancipatory potential, is unprepared to make.

In the following sections I investigate the nature of this dilemma and its implications. I begin by comparing in general terms Giroux's work and his subjective location as a political theorist with that of Foucault, the postmodern thinker Giroux draws upon most frequently, and I would argue, with greatest contradiction.[14] I turn then to focus specifically on the points of friction between Giroux's notion of teacher authority and Foucault's analytics of power. I have entitled these sections 'Power *and* Knowledge' to draw attention to Giroux's positivist vision of the connection between teacher authority and school curriculum, in contradistinction to Foucault's understanding of 'power/knowledge' as a dialectically reinforcing relationship. In my view, it is over this question of teacher authority and power/knowledge that the problematic of 'postmodern education' pivots.

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[14] The twofold danger in making such a statement, of course, lies in setting up Foucault as the locus of postmodern 'truth' to which I personally enjoy a privileged access. My aim however is neither to posit Foucault as the authority on postmodernism, nor myself as the authority on Foucault but rather to indicate the internal contradictions that inhere within Giroux's utilization of Foucauldian precepts. Arguments for consistency are not the same as claims to truth and my argument, that Giroux's appropriation of Foucault is contradictory, cannot simply be written off with a view to postmodern 'pastiche'. As Derrida's analyses demonstrate, the poststructuralist disavowal of universalizing claims to truth does not rule out the possibility of revealing theoretical misrepresentations within textual discourses. On the contrary, the methodology of deconstruction bases itself upon the assumption that texts can be found to systematically misapply theoretical concepts to support their arguments.

'LOOK, EPHEBE': FOUCAULT AND GIROUX

The geographical idiom in which Giroux imbues 'border pedagogy' calls immediate attention to the influence of Foucault.[15] At first glance, similarities both in terms of their fields of analysis and their predispositions toward political resistance make an alignment between the two theorists appear entirely appropriate. Foucault's geneological inquiries traced the the palpable convergence of discursive power and practice in particular Western institutional spheres of governance. Although he never conducted a full-length analysis on schooling, the relevance of his research methods to education was certainly evident to Foucault. Like the hospitals, prisons and military organizations analyzed in his studies, public schools function as apparatuses for subject-formation on the basis of a disciplinary relationship between the effects of truth and the production of power (Foucault 1980: 133). In the important essay, "The Subject and Power", the site of the school is indicated as exemplary of the discursive manifestations of power:

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[15] See "Questions on Geography" (Foucault 1980: 63-77). In Foucault's view, the spatial and strategic relations of power and knowledge go unexamined in traditional investigations which privilege temporal concepts of linearity, evolution, and history. Metaphors borrowed from geography and especially military geography, provide analytical access to these aspects of discursive realities: "once knowledge can be analysed in terms of region, domain, implantation, displacement, transposition, one is able to capture the process by which knowledge functions as a form of power and disseminates the effects of power" (1980: 69).

> take, for example, an educational institution: the disposal of its space, the meticulous regulations which govern its internal life, the different activities which are organized there, the diverse persons who live there or meet one another, each with his own function, his well-defined character -- all these things constitute a block of capacity-communication-power (1982: 787).

As such, schools represent an optimal arena for an examination of the 'micro-physics of power' and the systematic production and regulation of 'docile bodies' (Foucault 1977).

In addition to sharing similar objects of study, Giroux and Foucault appear to take like positions on the productive capacity of power and the possibilities for local resistance within spheres of domination. As early on as *Theory and Resistance* (1983), Giroux pointed to Foucault's description of power as a relationship characterized not only by domination but by its capacity to enable the formation of discourses. In Giroux's view, this understanding of power represents an essential resource for theorizing the potential for agency and transformation within oppressive social structures. He notes,

> as Foucault continually reminds us, power is not a static phenomenon; it is a process that is always in play (Foucault 1980). Put another way, power must be viewed in part as a form of production inscribed in the discourse and capabilities people use to make sense of the world. Otherwise the notion of power is subsumed under the category of domination and the issue of human agency gets relegated to a marginal place in educational theorizing (1983: 63).

Based on these similarities, it is logical to assume that Foucault's theoretical conclusions should apply in the context of Giroux's educational analyses.

Despite immediate resemblances, however, closer inspection reveals a fundamental epistemological disjuncture that in the end makes Foucault's theory inimical to critical pedagogy as Giroux has formulated it. In part this derives from the differential positions occupied by the theorists within the social matrix. Foucault was a philosopher and a social theorist. He described himself as an archaeologist, a geneologist, and later as a historian of ethics. What he was not was a political activist. While Foucault wrote *about* the specific intellectual, he did not try to become one. As I have noted, aside from his personal involvement in prisoners' rights movements in the 1960's and 1970's, Foucault was at pains to distantiate himself from social liberation movements. Nor was he disposed to counsel others on how best to develop liberationist leadership.

In contrast, Giroux works within a specific institutional framework. Although he has been criticized for a lack of sensitivity to the everyday concerns of educators in the field, this debate over practice is clearly one that is internal to the discourse of education.[16] Giroux's mandate is to educate educators as agents for political transformation. This embedded location within pedagogy commits Giroux to particular normative assumptions which Foucault, the metatheorist, is able to avoid.

Giroux's situation, then, is not a unique one, but symptomatic of the dilemma faced by activists who aim to link systematically postmodern social theory with practice. Where he goes fundamentally astray, however, is in glossing over the tensions which his critical appropriation of Foucault conditions. Below I attempt to demonstrate more precisely where these contradictions occur.

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[16] See Gore (1993) and my Chapter Four.

POWER AND KNOWLEDGE: INTELLECTUALS IN BORDER PEDAGOGY

> *As transformative intellectuals, cultural workers and teachers can engage in the invention of languages so as to provide spaces for themselves, their students and audiences to rethink their experiences in terms that both name relations of oppression and also offer ways in which to overcome them.*
>
> -- Henry Giroux, 1988b.

Giroux's discussion of teacher authority begins with his conceptualization of the 'intellectual'. Acknowledging the influence of Bourdieu (1977) and Gramsci (1971), Giroux defines the role the 'intellectual' as the producer of not only culture, but a language in which to articulate cultural critique.[17] There is no room here for political neutrality. The intellectual takes his or her place on a specific side of the social status quo, either as defendant or radical critic. As the "mediators, legitimators, and producers of ideas and social practices; [intellectuals] perform a function eminently political in nature" (1988c: 151).

In critical pedagogy, the concern lies clearly with the actions of the radical intellectual. Adopting Gramsci's emphasis on the consciousness-raising function of the 'radical organic intellectual', but expanding intellectual influence beyond the parameters of class, Giroux argues that,"transformative intellectuals can provide the moral, political and pedagogical leadership for those groups which take as their starting point the transformative critique of the conditions of oppression" (1988c: 152).[18] It is this educative role of the intellectual that underlies Giroux's commitment to the centrality of the category within the discourse of critical pedagogy. Throughout the development of his theoretical project, from *Theory and Resistance* (1983) to *Border Crossings* (1992), Giroux has insisted upon the designation of 'teacher-intellectual' to refer to the practitioner of critical pedagogical methods. While epithetical descriptors have appeared and changed through the years, from 'transformative intellectual'(1988c) to, most recently, 'public intellectual' (1992), the core idea remains as he explained it in 1988:

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[17] Although he expounds on the intellectual *function* , Giroux is reticent to discuss his view of the *nature* of the category -- whether as a class concept or otherwise.

[18] Giroux claims that Gramsci's theory of the 'radical organic intellectual' provides the pedagogical and political skills necessary to raise political awareness in the working class, and to help it develop leadership and engage in collective struggle. He notes, however, "the epithet 'organic' in our case cannot be reserved for those intellectuals who take the working class as the only revolutionary agent" (1988b: 151).

> acting as a transformative intellectual means helping students acquire critical knowledge about basic societal structures, such as the economy, the state, the workplace, and mass culture, so that such institutions can be open to potential transformation (1988c: 90).

Giroux defends the definition of teachers as intellectuals on the grounds that it 'redignifies' the occupation of teaching, rescuing it from instrumental visions of education in which teachers are understood as simply conduits for the transmission of predetermined social and cultural values.[19] Claiming geneological inheritance from John Dewey's progressive education, Giroux describes teachers-intellectuals as "reflective thinkers whose social function demands that they be given the ideological and material conditions necessary for them to make decisions, produce curricula, and act out of their own point of view" (1988b: 85). The designation 'intellectual', he suggests, "provides a referent for criticizing those forms of pedagogies that treat knowledge as fixed and deny students the opportunity to interrogate their own histories and voices" (1991b: 109).

In some ways, Foucault's argument on behalf of the 'specific' intellectual appears to mirror Giroux's depiction of teachers as intellectuals. In Foucault's view, the contemporary intellectual locates him or herself in a particular social and political institution, and works, by 'archaeological' and 'geneological' means, to uncover those subjugated knowledges which may challenge received perceptions about social and cultural constructs. He writes,

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[19] 'Redignifies', Jennifer Gore asks, in whose eyes?. She observes, "a cynical reading might suggest that such a trajectory attempts more to dignify educational theorizing within the academy rather than teachers' work itself .... Hence, we might ask whether the notion of teacher as 'transformative intellectual' functions in the interests of students, teachers, 'social change', and/or the theorist?" (1993: 101).

> the essential political problem for the intellectual is not to criticize the ideological contents supposedly linked to science or to ensure that his own scientific practice is accompanied by a correct ideology, but that of ascertaining the possibility of constituting a new politics of truth. The problem is not changing people's consciousnesses -- or what's in their heads -- but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth. It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time (1980: 132).

Nevertheless, Foucault combatted the leftist conception Giroux takes up, of intellectuals as leadership agents for political mobilization. Recalling his stance on the question of 'subjectivity', we note that for Foucault, social 'identity' markers must be seen as discursively-organized mechanisms facilitating 'cultural intelligibility' (Butler 1991) under hegemonic 'regimes of truth'. As Whitson observes with respect to hegemony, the successful achievement of 'freedom' or the development of 'resistance' among marginalized groups is unlikely to be reached by adopting identity markers -- oppositional or not -- that have been designed to contain differences in support of the dominant system.

In Foucault's view, then, task for emancipatory-minded intellectuals is *not* to 'raise consciousness' among the 'working class' (or other groups marked by a subjective social positioning) by demonstrating the 'truth' of its identity. Rather than leading movements for the 'reclamation' of marginalized identities, the intellectual works by unmasking the mechanisms of discursive power which transform emancipatory efforts into instruments of domination. As in all cases, the questions posed by the suspicious Foucauldian intellectual remain, *under what historical* *circumstances, and for whose benefit have* (these concepts of identity and these identity markers) *come to be seen as true?*

This approach to the intellectual function radically distinguishes Foucault from efforts to organize political mobilization, including Giroux's project for emancipatory critical pedagogy. I draw attention to the difference not in order to demonstrate Giroux's *inaccuracy*, since nowhere has he claimed to follow Foucault to the letter. On the contrary, Giroux himself has argued that emancipatory movements require a global vision that is lacking from Foucault's call for 'specificity':

> critical pedagogy needs to develop a theory of educators and cultural workers as transformative intellectuals who occupy specific political and social locations .... Cultural workers need to take seriously Foucault's model of the specific intellectual who acknowledges the politics of personal location. This is important, but not enough ... cultural workers must also actively struggle as public intellectuals who can relate to and address wider issues that affect both the immediacy of their location and the wider global context (1992: 76).

What concerns me, as I noted above, is Giroux's disregard of the tension inherent applying Foucauldian theory to support an institutional regime of truth such as education. This tension, and the contradictions it produces, become clearer in the next section, where I discuss the question of teacher authority.

POWER AND KNOWLEDGE: REINVENTING AUTHORITY

As I have indicated, border pedagogy refuses to participate in the present formation of curricular hierarchies. In Giroux's view, however, this refusal, and the creation of new, critical languages by teacher-intellectuals, will mark a challenge to the dominant educational system -- and to the larger social and political context in which it operates -- only if the practitioners of border pedagogy retain their status of authority. There is no location, he observes, from which to launch a politics of transformation outside the current social framework. Resistance efforts can only be organized inside current relations of power, with the tools available.[20] He notes,

> there is no pure space from which to develop either a politics of resistance or a politics of identity. Indeed, the struggle for voice and collective empowerment has to be forged within, not outside, the mediating traditions and histories that link the center and the margins ... (1991d: 74).

According to Giroux, teachers who claim on political grounds to disengage from their socially-ascribed positions of authority miss Foucault's essential point that power is also productive. Rather than reflecting a sensitivity toward the risks of imposition, the pedagogical flight from authority forecloses on the opportunity to actively influence shifts in the 'flow' of power (1991a:123).[21] These teachers default on the goal of political transformation, performing a disservice to students:

> what border pedagogy makes undeniable is the relational nature of one's own politics and personal investments. But at the same time, border pedagogy emphasizes the primacy of a politics in which teachers assert rather than retreat from the pedagogies they utilize in dealing with the various differences represented by the students who come into their classes (1991a: 130).

It is only by accepting and mobilizing their authority that teachers can define their agentic function as social critics and cultural producers in the struggle for radical democracy. For teachers' intellectual work to be truly transformative, then, what is at stake over the question of authority is a matter of reformulation, not abandonment. Giroux argues, "for radical educators and others working in oppositional social movements, the dominant meaning of authority must be redefined to include the concepts of freedom, equality, and democracy" (1991a: 127).

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[20] Judith Butler (1990), speaks similarly, with reference to the question of gender politics and sexuality:

> if sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations, then the postulation of a normative sexuality that is 'before', outside', or 'beyond' power is a cultural impossibility and a politically impracticable dream, one that postpones the concrete and contemporary task of rethinking subversive possibilities for sexuality and identity with the terms of power itself (1990: 30).

[21] Giroux's implicit understanding of power as 'property' which is distributed has been criticized for misconstruing power's relational aspect. The question of power/ empowerment, while pivotal to postmodern political issues, unfortunately falls outside the parameters of this discussion. For an insightful reading, see Gore (1992, 1993).

Following the general line of poststructuralist and semiotic theory, Giroux notes that the meanings associated with the concept of 'authority' derive from its discursive positioning. In itself, 'authority' bears no intrinsic signification (1988b: 74). This understanding opens up opportunities for redefinition of the term. By rewriting the context in which 'authority' is articulated, he argues, new possibilities become available to theorize a vision of teacher authority uncorrelated with institutional oppression. With Foucault's analytics of power in mind, Giroux begins to formulate a concept of productive pedagogical power defined as 'emancipatory authority' (1988b:73). He notes, "authority in this view becomes a mediating referent for the ideal of democracy and its expression as a set of educational practices designed to empower students to be critical and active citizens" (1988b: 88).

According to Giroux, the teacher who is politically predisposed to educate for critical citizenship, and who presents a pedagogical curriculum that investigates subjugated knowledges in a dialogical fashion, is 'authorized' to empower students in the critical reclamation of their social and cultural identities. This form of authority is grounded on the ideals of radical democracy: 'justice', 'solidarity', and the 'public sphere'. In Giroux's reading, the commitment to radical democracy appears to absolve teacher authority from the taint of domination, warranting the (otherwise dubious) epithet 'emancipatory'.[22] It is at this point that Giroux's pedagogical project begins to succeeds in cleansing Marxism of its essentialist presumptions while at the same time retaining its focussed critique of exploitation -- a politicism missing from much postmodern analysis.

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[22] Since it provides the ballast for Giroux's defence of teacher authority, it is worthwhile, at this juncture, to take a closer look at the theory of Ernesto Laclau and, especially, Chantal Mouffe (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, Mouffe 1988, 1992). In their first discussions of the concept of 'radical democracy' (1985), they argued for a shift in emphasis from orthodox Marxist valuations of class *consciousness*, to a consideration of subjective (class) *positionings* within current organizations of power. In this case 'difference' is understood not as an inherent characteristic, but as a social construction arising from differential locations in the power matrix. Giroux describes this amalgam of Marxist class analyses with the poststructuralist emphasis on subjective construction as incorporating " the best insights from modernism and postmodernism" (1991: 117). Indeed from all appearances, the 'post-Marxist' perspective

Mouffe's more recent work has proceeded in a direction, however, that appears to undercut the utility of her earlier reflections on 'difference'. In developing her conception of 'radical democracy', Mouffe calls for oppositional political movements, including antiracism, antisexism and anticapitalism, to form a 'chain of equivalence' in which to articulate their resistance efforts (1988). An 'equalization' of oppressions is expected, in dialectical fashion, both to strengthen the movement toward the general objective of democratic reformulation, and likewise, to avert the risk of internal skirmishes. Mouffe writes,

> a radical democratic interpretation ... indicates the common recognition by the different groups that ... they have a common concern ... The aim is to construct a "we" as radical democratic citizens, a collective political identity articulated through the principle of democratic equivalence. It must be stressed that such a relation of equivalence does not eliminate difference -- that would be simple identity. It is only insofar as democratic differences are opposed to forces or discourses which negate all of them that these differences are substitutable for each other (1992: 378-379).

Linking this perspective to pedagogy, Giroux claims,

> the formation of democratic citizens demands forms of political identity which radically extend the principles of justice, liberty, and dignity to public spheres constituted by difference and multiple forms of community. Such identities have to be constructed as a part of a pedagogy in *which difference becomes a basis for solidarity and unity* ... (emphasis added; 1991: 128).

Beyond the immediate semantic contradiction in this passage from Giroux (in concrete terms, what can it mean for 'difference' to become a 'basis for solidarity and unity'?) the conception of democratic equivalence raises serious difficulties for identity politics. 'Radical democracy' apparently requires that different resistance groups share a common opponent located exterior to the chain of equivalent oppressions. Such a presumption reinvokes the essentialist 'victim as virtuous' mentality and ignores Foucault's important demonstration of the capillary nature of power. In this view, power is never only an external imposition and no one is ever outside or innocent of power relations. Foucault's point does more than simply restate the victim's participation in his or her own oppression. It reminds us that no one is ever only oppressed, but that all of us, connected as we are within a web of interlocking power relations, participate in discursive regimes as oppressors as well.

Identity markers represent a constantly shifting currency struggles for power. While I may be marginalized on the basis of my female gender, I receive privilege in this society over a black man or a lesbian in terms of race or sexuality. What this suggests in terms of 'radical democracy' is that disparate identity groups are unlikely to come together without contradiction. As Trinh Minh-Ha observes most simply, "everyone is someone else's other" (1987: 8). From this perspective, it is necessary to look upon the formulation of 'general democratic objectives' with ample suspicion. In whose interest is it that the particular goals outlined for a 'radical democratic' slate are identified as 'general'?

A similar difficulty, though at a different level, emerges in Mouffe's discussion of 'the new type of subject' that 'radical democracy' would serve. According to Mouffe (1991, 1992) the salience of particular identity categories varies with the specific social context under examination. In relation to feminism she observes that,

> (the subject or 'social agent' reflects) the articulation of an ensemble of subject positions, corresponding to the multiplicity of social relations in which it is inscribed. This multiplicity is constructed within specific discourses which have no necessary relation but only contingent and precarious forms of articulation. There is no reason why sexual difference should be pertinent in all social relations (1992: 376-377).

An individual, then, is *either* black, poor, female, or lesbian, and is capable of separating out her various political objectives in accordance with the particular discursive constellation in which she is engaged. That is, an individual can lobby on behalf of race *or* class *or* gender *or* sexuality, etc., as political circumstances require: my subject position as female will not be relevant in a discussion of race. Missing from such a formulation is a sensitivity to the ways in which oppressions converge within the social field (See Butler 1992: 13). In reality, the overdetermined subject-positions (i.e., black *and* poor *and* female and lesbian) such convergences produce are unlikely to be disentangled so easily as Mouffe suggests.

slide into circularity and loses its postmodern edge. He claims, "emancipatory authority establishes as a central principle the need for teachers and others to critically engage the ideological and practical conditions which allow them to mediate, legitimate, and function in their capacity as authority-minded intellectuals" (1988b: 90).

As I noted in terms of the power/knowledge nexus and school curriculum, what is at issue in questions surrounding claims to legitimacy is less the contents of knowledge or the justifications of power but the location from which these are articulated. The postmodern understanding of 'discourse' has been expressed variously but with the same import by Lyotard, Derrida, and especially Foucault.[23] Emphasized most strongly in their analyses is the absence of any extra/supra-discursive arbiter to distinguish between opposing claims to authority. From this perspective, Giroux's grounding of teacher-authority on claims to 'emancipation' cannot be read as any different than traditional curricular claims expressed in the name of 'truth'. In my view, Giroux's defense of authority confuses justification with 'justice'. While teachers may indeed require an authoritative status to teach effectively on behalf of radical democracy and justice, *it does not follow that the ascription of their authority will be radical, democratic or just.*[24] This contradiction seems to suggest an impasse between the suspicions of postmodernism and the hopes and ambitions articulated by emancipatory political movements like critical education.

Giroux's inattention to the essentialist implications in Mouffe's argument is indicative of a general lack of reflexivity in his aim to conjoin postmodernism with the modernist project of critical pedagogy.

[23] See my Chapter One.

[24] Gore points to the same tension, noting, "the 'emancipatory authority' of critical pedagogy, exercised in the pursuit of justice and emancipation, may be dangerous (like any other discourse) to the extent that it sees itself as not requiring further justification or critique (1993: 103).

COMING CLEAN: STRATEGIES FOR EMANCIPATION IN FEMINIST POLITICS/PEDAGOGICAL PRAXIS

In pedagogical terms, the postmodern critique of the foundations of rationalism appears to shift the site of social analysis from curriculum to the power of the teacher. Returning to my introductory question, then, is it possible to forge a pedagogical politics in a postmodern world? My answer is yes, but not in the terms of critical pedagogy as it stands. As I have noted, a similar dilemma presents itself in feminist political discourses. In concluding I would like to return to the discussion I took up in Chapter Two of the arguments presented by Nancy Hartsock and Jane Flax. I believe that an extrapolation of Flax's approach to feminism provides a useful avenue for negotiating the postmodern crisis in critical pedagogy.

In Chapter Two I drew attention to Nancy Hartsock's disagreement with Foucault. Interestingly, a close relationship is discernable between Hartsock's feminist critique of the Foucauldian analysis of power and Giroux's mobilization of it for 'border pedagogy'. If nothing else, this apparent contradiction demonstrates the contested meanings ascribed that have been to the postmodern field. In my view, what underlies Hartsock's valorization of 'situated epistemologies', as well as Giroux's argument for 'emancipatory authority', is a predisposition to read the traditional Western renditions of epistemology and reason as ideologically *laden* rather than ideologically *constituted.* Both theorists reinvoke the modernist assumption that by reasoning 'differently' (i.e. more fairly and correctly), liberationist movements secure their right to speak on behalf of 'truth'.

In Hartsock's case, this assumption is revealed in the defence she mounts against the potential critique of essentialism in her theory. She notes, "this (argument for 'situated epistemologies') is not to argue that oppression creates 'better' people: on the contrary, the experience of domination and marginalization leaves many scars.

Rather it is to note that marginalized groups are far less likely to mistake themselves for the universal 'man'" (1990a: 171). This may be so, but Hartsock's emphasis on 'man' betrays her confusion with respect to postmodern scepticism. Within postmodern theory, what is problematic about Enlightenment metanarratives is not so much the *masculinity of their universalism* as the *universalism of their masculinity.*

Giroux makes a similar oversight in his review of border pedagogy. He observes, "central to border pedagogy informed by postmodern criticism is the need to point to ways in which *those* master narratives based on white, patriarchal, and class-specific versions of the world can be challenged and deterriorialized" (emphasis added; 1991a: 120). What may be a semantic slip here belies the error. Like Hartsock, Giroux would replace the privileged epistemology of the current dominant group with the epistemology of the currently oppressed. With knowledge thus reformulated as less exclusive, the power 'side' of the social relations coin is expected to be more benign : 'a kinder, gentler' power.

Poststructuralist analyses have demonstrated that binaristic reversals of this nature do little in the way of dismantling the structure of oppression as a whole. Jane Flax's (1990, 1992) thoughtful rejoinder to versions of feminist standpoint theory such as that articulated by Hartsock is worth reiterating for the context of critical pedagogy. Flax begins with the poststructuralist disavowal of epistemology as a means of legitimating truth claims. In her view, the feminist recourse to epistemology -- 'marginalized' or otherwise -- reflects a dangerous 'will to innocence,' and a misunderstanding of the connection between knowledge, truth and power.

Following Foucault, Flax refuses the notion of neutral power, and moreover, that idea that power inflected with 'truer' -- or, in Sandra Harding's estimation, "less false" (1990: 100) -- knowledge will be less oppressive. As the Foucauldian analysis of discourse indicates, the salient characteristic of those knowledges influential in the organization of power relations is not a matter of their relative 'truth'. Rather, the appraisal of 'truth' must be seen as an *effect* , not a cause, of power. Foucault observes,

> by truth I do not mean 'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted,' but rather 'the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true, it being understood also that it's not a matter of a battle 'on behalf' of the truth but of a battle about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays (1980: 132).

Contrary to Hartsock and Giroux, however, Flax does not judge the postmodern delegitimation of innocent power as signalling the demise of liberatory politics. Instead of seeking new answers to old questions of justification and legitimation, Flax suggests that political theory and activism should move in an altogether different direction. Just as Carmen Luke (1992: 48) suggests that the death of the rational subject of the Enlightenment gives birth to 'other' subjects, Flax reads 'the end of innocence' as a catalyst for the development of a new form of ethics and political engagement. Here the self-righteousness of truth-claims would be replaced with a self-reflexive acknowledgement of *interest.*

Flax articulates this emphasis on interest in terms of 'responsibility'. In a postmodern context it is no longer viable for political theorists and activists to wave away their political impositions with an authoritative carte-blanche stamped 'Truth'. Postmodern responsibility requires, rather, that we own up to the infractions we may commit on behalf of our political interests; acknowledging first that these are, indeed, infractions, and moreover, that they are never 'justifiable'.

This call for responsibility in political endeavours pinpoints the debilitating blindspot in Giroux's project to legitimate teacher authority for postmodern education. While Giroux's theory in principle gives voice to notions of self-reflexivity and the partiality of knowledge, there is less evidence of his attention to these issues in fact.

Although he describes the necessity for self-reflexivity, in his discussions of Foucault and 'emancipatory authority,' he does not inscribe it.[25] The dilemma that faces critical education in a postmodern era thus becomes: how is it ethically possible both to enjoy institutionally-generated, non-innocent authority (which, contrary to Giroux's utopianism, *is* the nature of teacher authority, emancipatory or not) while at the same time mobilizing counter-institutional political strategems such as deconstruction and 'subjugated knowledges' to develop a language of critical 'hope'?

Linda Hutcheon's (1989) understanding of the postmodern 'complicitous critique' is relevant for moving through this problem. According to Hutcheon, in a society composed of complexly integrated and overlapping institutional structures, it has become naive to think, regardless of our emancipatory and critical intentions, that we might ever locate ourselves outside the power-laden structures which we may seek to transform. Moreover, we should not expect such transformations -- a radical curriculum, a radical classroom -- to be free themselves of potentially oppressive effects.

This 'postmodern condition' does not in itself rule out the possibility for politics but it does require the critic to reflect more closely on the positioning of her or his critique. We are always, already implicated in the relations and institutions we seek to change, thus our critique is 'double-coded': we identify with the object of our criticism. Hutcheon notes, "this is a strange kind of critique, one bound up, too with its own complicity with power and domination, one that acknowledges that it cannot escape implication in that which it nevertheless still wants to analyze and maybe even undermine" (1989: 4).

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[25] There is a thesis to be written on the disparity between oral and written cultures in critical discourses, and on the omissions conditioned by the imperative for textual coherence. As I have intimated, in 'real life', Foucault was more sympathetic to resistance politics than he admitted in his formal, theoretical work. Giroux bends from his theoretical arguments in a similar way. In a recent interview, he acknowledged "I have no trouble at all in exercising authority *as long as I'm constantly self-critical about the limits of my own knowledge*" (1992: 157). That the interview was published as part of a major compilation of his not-always self-critical formal writings suggests there is still a considerable way to go before postmodern 'intertextuality' adequately bridges these differentiated discourses.

The implications of such a perspective hold important consequences for the development of pedagogical practices in the context of postmodernity. It is my position that critical pedagogical 'hope' is only lost to the disillusionment of postmodernism while we continue to understand the discourse as grounded on indisputable truths which inform, with unfaltering consistency, practices that are just. To operate effectively in an era of postmodernity, critical pedagogy must be reformulated as self-reflexively aware and critical of its complicity with the institutional regime of truth that it seeks to transform. Following Foucault's advice that 'everything is dangerous', teachers cannot afford to assume that a commitment to democracy renders their institutionally-sanctioned authority over students as innocent or emancipatory. Nor can they assume that their 'empowering' pedagogical methods will necessarily be received as unoppressive and non-impositional.

This does not suggest that critical pedagogues must -- or can -- stand paralyzed. It does ask, however, that the discourse of critical pedagogy accept a dose of what Mark Poster has deemed "poststructural modesty" (1989: 31). In his most recent work, Roger Simon points to the direction in which a convergence of the complicitous critique and the requirement for responsibility would move the discourse of critical pedagogy:

> I have deep reservations about teaching in the name of truth ... I do not think it is possible to organize a set of teaching responsibilities and practices on a principle that stands outside human history (i.e. within a neutral universe of reason beyond the particularities of time and space) ... What must be stressed is that this position *initiates* rather than closes off the problem of responsibility. That is, it requires that one hold open for assessment those practices which generate one's claim to knowledge. Thus while there may be no epistemological limit, no finally decideable relationship between perception and reality, ... we must affirm ethical limits ... As Kearney emphasizes, "we reach a point in the

> endless spiral of undecidability where each one of us is obliged to make an ethical and political decision, to say, *here I stand*. (Or at the level of collective responsibility, *here we stand)"* (original emphasis; Simon 1992: 16).

Henry Giroux has called for a new language. What appears to be needed, in addition, is a new practice. In the next chapter I examine the arguments of feminist/ poststructuralist theorists who have most astutely brought the questions of critical theory and critical practice to the forefront of pedagogical research. I believe that it is in their work that we may find the first outline for an authentic, self/critical pedagogy for postmodernity.

PRAXIS

CHAPTER FOUR

REROUTE: FEMINIST POSTSTRUCTURALIST PEDAGOGY

> *What is at issue here is not simply the specifics of the arguments ... but the debilitating effects of a problematic encoded in the simple reversal of colonial binarisms that reproduce a reductionistic 'us' against 'them' discourse."*
> --- Henry Giroux, 1993.

In Chapter One I highlighted the general assumptions deriving out of postmodernist and poststructuralist social theory. In Chapter Two I considered some of the various approaches feminist politics has taken to engage with these assumptions. Chapter Three provided an analysis of Henry Giroux's efforts to do the same for critical pedagogy. Now it is time to attempt to weave the threads of these arguments together. In this final -- if not 'concluding' -- chapter, I draw attention to the work of self-professed 'feminist poststructuralist' theorists of critical pedagogy. I suggest that the work of these women provides the best indication so far of what a viable postmodern, political, and pedagogical practice should look like.

My format for presenting their analyses consists of a stylized 'deconstruction' of a critical essay by Nicholas Burbules and Suzanne Rice (1991). I have chosen this method of deconstruction for two reasons. First, and most obviously, it provides an example of the Derridean critique which I described in Chapter One. As I indicated there, deconstruction's immanent approach points to the blindspots in textual discourse that ultimately function to contradict the author's argument. In Chapter Three I observed that it was precisely the problem of a *blindspot* which undermined Giroux's presentation of 'border pedagogy'. Burbules and Rice reveal a similar blindspot in their defence of Giroux's theory and their critique of his critics. By deconstructing the argument they put forth on Giroux's behalf, I hope to emphasize the necessity for self-reflexivity and self-awareness both in pedagogical practice and pedagogical theorizing.

ENTERING THE DISCOURSE: FEMINISM AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

Until recently, the vast majority of feminist work in educational research has been concerned with the quantitative and qualitative measurement of gender oppression in schools. Based on the results of these studies, feminists have called for more equitable curricular opportunities for female students and educators (i.e. 'teach girls math'; 'hire women to teach hard sciences') and for the removal of biased and stereotypical gender portraits from scholastic curricular materials. Of late, some feminist researchers have a taken a different, poststructuralist tack. Like sociologist Dorothy Smith (1989, 1990), who argues that gender bias in social science research will not be resolved by simply 'adding on' women's studies to an otherwise patriarchal framework, these theorists deem it as necessary to investigate the underlying philosophical assumptions which inform pedagogical practices as it is to examine the curriculum. If the 'how' and the 'why' of teaching are inextricably connected to what gets taught, then gender neutral language in textbooks may be necessary but is not sufficient to counteract an institutional predisposition to privilege males.

Most significantly, these theorists have begun to challenge the assumptions of the 'New' sociology of education, and have provided the most incisive interrogation of Henry Giroux's 'critical' approach to conducting classroom politics.[1] Following in the line of Nancy Fraser, who asks, "What's Critical About Critical Theory" (1989: 113), these theorists seek to turn the discourse of critical pedagogy in on itself, measuring it against its own claims to insight.

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[1] It should not go without notice that, although 'gender' has been taken on board with 'race' and 'class' as factors for analysis in the 'New' sociology of education, feminists and women have not figured among the 'top' ranks of the New sociologists.

The claims to truth pronounced by mainstream pedagogy's 'feminist' corrective, described by Schib as "the cherished stereotype of the feminist classroom as a scene of perpetual collaborative bliss" (in Gore 1993: 28) are equally subject to suspicion by these theorists. In her analysis of the critical and feminist pedagogical ideal of 'empowerment'. Jennifer Gore cites Taubman on the 'dangers of a feminist pedagogy' in which

> the old dualities are preserved. The origin of truth is found in anatomy .... Feminist pedagogy loses its usefulness to the extent that it sees itself as synonymous with good teaching, having an exclusive claim on good teaching ... It loses its forces to the extent that it locates the origin and horizon of pedagogy in and on the bodies of women (quoted in Gore 1992: 66).

This self-critical stance, however, is not taken to mean paralysis. The theoretical rifts between identity politics and poststructuralist philosophy in other disciplinary domains and the poststructuralist threat of neutralization have not been lost on feminist theorists of pedagogy. Positioning their politics first and foremost, they claim to appropriate poststructuralism as a useful tool, not a credo. Echoing Butler, Luke and Gore introduce their anthology of writings on feminist pedagogy with this warning:

> we refuse to align with, or pay homage to, what others totalize as "postmodern [or poststructural] feminism", a feminism that "rejects all forms of essentialism" (Giroux, 1991, p.44). Through our engendered thinking and situated knowledges (de Lauretis, 1990), as women in education, our positions are feminist. Poststructuralist or postmodernist theoretical tenets have been helpful to the extent that they fit with our feminist political projects(s) and our attempts to construct pedagogies (1992: 5).

Poststructuralism, then, is seen by these theorists to issue a warning against the tendency to universalize and to signal educators "to abandon crusading rhetoric and to begin to think outside of a framework which sees the "other" as the problem for which they are the solution" (Lather 1991b: 47).

Notwithstanding such remarks, or perhaps on account of them, the backlash against this critical approach has been swift. Feminist poststructuralist theorists of pedagogy have been accused of bad faith, of nihilism, of "degrading the rich complexity of theoretical and pedagogical processes that characterize the diverse discourses in the field of critical pedagogy" (Giroux 1988: 177), and of taking a position of

> political foolishness (and) political inertia and moral cowardness where educators remain frozen in the zone of 'dead' practice in which it is assumed that all voices are those which silence or which contain the 'other' by a higher act of violence, and all passionate ethical stances are those built upon the edifices of some form of tyranny or another. Unable to speak with any certainty, or with an absolute assurance that his or her pedagogy is untainted by any form of domination, the 'post critical' educator refuses to speak at all (McLaren 1991: 172).

I would like to evaluate these criticisms through a 'deconstructive conversation' with a recent text by Nicholas Burbules and Suzanne Rice (1991). As Derrida indicates, the purpose of deconstruction is to reveal, through the dual gestures of *différance,* a faulty organizational structure based on binary oppositions that masks a text's reliance on precisely those epistemological elements it claims to eschew. In their article, "Dialogue across Differences: Continuing the Conversation", Burbules and Rice argue that the (feminist poststructuralist) arguments raised against critical pedagogy reflect an 'antimodernist' perspective that is antithetical to "positive educational goals" (1991: 395).

By indicating a possible 'reversal' and 'displacement' of the organizing categories Burbules and Rice employ, it is my intention to demonstrate, if not a reliance then a substantive *alliance* between Burbules and Rice and the so-called 'antimodern' perspective of feminist poststructuralism they claim to reject. Through this process, I hope to point out the significance and value of some of the insights raised by this new perspective in pedagogical research.

CONVERSING WITH THE CRITICS

Burbules and Rice focus their paper on the concept of 'dialogue across differences' which they seek to defend against postmodernist attacks, outlining its positive potential and considering the necessary conditions under which it could take place. The authors begin with a brief outline of what they consider to be the three central assumptions of postmodernist philosophy: a rejection of metanarratives, a recognition of power as infused in all discourses, and the heightened awareness of subjective differences. Then they turn to pedagogical theory, organizing those theorists influenced by postmodernism into two opposed groups, which they define as 'postmodern' and 'antimodern'.

For Burbules and Rice, the 'postmodern' pedagogical group (representing critical pedagogy theorists Giroux and McLaren) is "fundamentally continuous with the modernist tradition", although it seeks to "reappropriate and expand in significance" modernist concepts (1991: 397-98). The 'antimodernist' group, on the other hand, makes a "complete break" from modernism (1991: 397); but, by offering no clear alternative to it or to the pedagogical values modernism proposes the 'antimodernists' are stuck in the groove of oppositional critique and nay-saying -- a position, according to Burbules and Rice, that is clearly untenable. The authors are less specific as to whom they categorize under this this 'antimodernist' perspective. By virtue of her critical essay on critical pedagogy, Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) is certainly seen as an exemplar; Bronwyn Davies (1989, 1990) and Patti Lather (1991a, 1991b) are indicated indirectly through citation. Although she is not a theorist of pedagogy, the work of Iris Marion Young (1990) is also noted to reflect the 'antimodernist' position. From my reading of their work, what these theorists share in common is not an 'antimodernist' perspective insofar as it is defined by Burbules and Rice, but rather a feminist poststructuralist approach to issues related to social change. Therefore, while I reject the *category* of 'antimodernism' as an inaccurate description of the theorists indicated, I accept the general *categorization* of them as a group. In my 'conversation' with Burbules and Rice I employ the category 'antimodern' to refer to feminist poststructuralists and expand it to include the voices of other theorists of similar perspective.

REVERSAL

Burbules and Rice argue that, in contrast to the 'antimodern' theorists who reject modernist ideals out of hand, the work of Giroux and McLaren reflects a 'clear' attempt to "reappropriate and expand modernist concepts such as democracy, liberty, rights, citizenship, and so forth" (1991: 398). The following quotation from Giroux is cited as one of the best examples of such efforts:

> postmodernism must extend and broaden the most democratic claims of modernism ... [It must be] linked with the modernist language of public life ... as part of a public philosophy that broadens and deepens individual liberties and rights ... [Postmdern pedagogy] is informed by a political project that links the creation of citizens to the development of a critical democracy; that is, a political project that links education to the struggle for public life in which discourse, vision, and compassion are attentive to the rights and conditions that organize public life as a democratic social form (Giroux 1991d:82; in Burbules and Rice 1991: 398)

To know what is 'good' about 'democracy' (or 'liberty', 'rights', or 'citizenship'), however, and what isn't good and should be redefined, as well as to know how education should be involved in such projects for redefinition, requires pedagogical theorists to investigate the historical development of these concepts, to consider the normative implications that have been attached to them in different historical and social contexts, and to evaluate seriously their effects. As a 'clear' example of such an approach, Giroux's rhetoric here, and in the rest of the paper cited, strike me as seriously lacking. In contrast, critics of the 'antimodernist' perspective, who, according to Burbules and Rice have abandoned modernism altogether, in fact are actually producing the type of analysis called for. In my view, the argument that these theorists refuse to consider the value of modernist ideals reflects a misunderstanding of the so-called 'antimodernist' position, with the result that Burbules and Rice situate these theorists on the wrong side of the 'postmodern'/ 'antimodern' opposition which they devise. I believe that Carmen Luke's (1992) discussion of critical pedagogy and democracy, which appeared after Burbules and Rice's publication, goes far to setting the misunderstanding straight.

Luke's problematization of radical (critical) pedagogy takes the Foucauldian form of inquiry by tracing the 'geneology' of its central tenets ('democracy', 'citizenship', 'public discourse', etc.). Understanding that meaning is always contextually-constituted, Luke asks, 'what combination of historical and social circumstances have made it possible for these 'critical' discourses to come into being?'. And, 'in whose interest are these discourses circulated?'. Luke traces the divergent roots of the anti-racist, anti-sexist discourses of critical pedagogy (Gramscian neo-Marxism and Frankfurt School Critical Theory, as well as the liberal bourgeois philosophy of Dewey) to a common epistemological reliance upon an Enlightenment ideal of democracy. Her review of the feminist literature on political history points to a profound 'gender-blindness' in the modern liberal democratic agenda. The concept of 'democracy', as theorized from Plato through Hegel onward, takes for granted the division of public and private spheres (culture/nature) as symbolic of the distinction between female right (familial and religious) and male law (civil and political).[2] Within this organization, the standpoint of the public citizen (male property-owner) is prioritized to the exclusion of all 'others'. The ideology of democracy offers to free females to assume locations in the public while retaining "'natural' caretaker positions in private" (1992: 32) 'Public' discourse and 'culture' remain concerned with issues relevant specifically to male citizens. Others who share an interest in such issues are welcome to participate -- so long as their 'other' and private issues do not seep into the public sphere.

'Democracy' as it stands, then, cannot be the goal of resistance movements against sexist or racist practices in our culture, and should not be the motivating force behind emancipatory pedagogies. As Kristeva notes, "at this level of radicalism, it is the very principle of sociality which is challenged" (1986: 208). In Luke's view, radical politics needs to aim for something different. Ellsworth makes the same point when she states that, "'utopian moments' of 'democracy'/ equality'/'justice' ... are undesirable because they are always predicated on the interests of those who are in a position to define utopian projects" (1989: 308).

While critical pedagogy encourages personal disclosure and the (postmodern) announcement of 'marginalized' voicesin the classroom, it does so in the name of this form of liberal democracy.[3] With the concept itself founded upon 'assymetrical though equal participation', the 'democratic' stance of critical pedagogy seriously contradicts its own anti-exclusionary claims, with the ultimate effect, Luke argues, of undermining the discourse. Considering critical pedagogy's uncritical celebration of democratic, 'public life', she notes,

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[2] See Julia Kristeva's "Women's Time" (1979) in Kristeva (1986) for an historical discussion of the 'sacrificial symbolic order'.

[3] Luke's focus on sexism leads her to analyze the encouragement of voices of girls; but other biases have also been raised as issues by feminist poststructuralists. See Ellsworth (1989) for a discussion of race and racism.

> to what extent we can epistemologically or theoretically overlook not just "innocent" historical omission but explicitly misogynist articulations of exclusion and dehumanization, and then accept these master narratives as unproblematic "ideal", and as epistemological and theoretical cornerstones of a liberatory, democratic pedagogy that purports to be grounded in a politics of gender, race and class is a serious problem indeed (1992: 35).

The texts of critical pedagogy neglect to investigate how the articulation of private experience in the public classroom is to function in the disruption of exclusionary although democratic practices within wider social institutions and structures, including the school system itself:

> encouraging critical ... dialogue and legitimating personal voice within the extant structure of schooling and contemporary society and culture, assumes that institutionalized interpretive 'praxis' will or should somehow enable the dismantling of the contradictions of patriarchal structures and supporting discourses ... to democratize the classroom speech situation, and to encourage marginal groups to make public what is personal and private does not alter theoretically or practically those ... structural divisions upon which liberal capitalism and its knowledge industries are based. Those very divisions have generated countless discourses of, strategies and pleas for 'equalities' in the first place (1992: 37).

As with Dorothy Smith's (1990) suspicious critique of the emergence of women's studies in sociology, Luke suggests that opening up sexist institutions may not in fact be the appropriate critical pedagogical goal:

> granting voices to girls in the public sphere of the democratic classroom is an add-on tactic of incorporation .... (such) conceptual "add-on" tactics serve strategically to retain a theoretical structure in which the other can effectively be incorporated and made visible into an epistemology which privileges public man and his speech. A truly radical pedagogy cannot afford to leave its theoretical assumptions beyond self-critique, particularly if that pedagogy claims to be centrally based on self-reflexive practice (1992: 32).

Although Luke disparages critical pedagogy for its adoption of anti-feminist neo-Marxisms and Frankfurt School Critical Theory perspectives,[4] the implications of her paper suggest the need for an analysis that would deploy Gramsci's (1971) conception of hegemony and Marcuse's (1964) 'repressive desublimation' against the emancipatory exhortations of their pedagogical progeny. As Tony Whitson notes, critical pedagogy's oppositional practices are ripe for co-optation wherein classroom 'democracy' becomes simply a resource for 'cooling off' potentially disruptive desires safely within the confines of the dominant institutions:

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[4] Her vociferous rejection of Marcuse (and his predecessor, Freud) warrants quotation:

> the essential and unique contribution of "hegemony" is its revelation of how the program of dominant groups is advanced, not simply by excluding oppositional programs, but by locating the opposition within the total ideological and sociopolitical structure in places where the opposition may be harmless or even supporting to the structure's viability (1991: 79)

Thus, in contrast to Burbules and Rice's observations, Luke's analysis suggests that, at least from a feminist perspective, critical pedagogy's radical 'reformulation' of democratic principles has not taken place. As a result, critical pedagogy appears to occupy an untenable theoretical position:

> the failure to take into theoretical consideration this fundamental argument (against the masculinist underpinnings of liberal democracy) within feminisms reveals a patriarchalism among those who today make the most vocal claims to be pro-feminist, to be struggling on behalf of the socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged (1992: 32).

Feminist poststructuralists, on the other hand, appear to be doing the critical pedagogues' reflexive homework for them, by examining modernist democratic principles and uncovering the characteristics of 'democracy' which require transformation. Armed with this 'dangerous knowledge' (Foucault 1980), they are calling modernist values to be reformulated and for transformative pedagogy to

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I am, however, unconvinced that Frankfurt School depth psychology -- derived as it is from the master theorist of phallocentrism -- is an adequate psychological and social theory for the explanation of identity formation and development in any subjects other than Western (and Westernized) males. As such, it is appropriately authored by those to whom the theory speaks, and can be read as politically relevant for those upon whom such an epistemological standpoint is both derivative of and centered upon (1992: 44).

transform itself. Burbules and Rice's accusation, then, that the 'antimodernists' abandon consideration of the values of modernist democracy and democratic pedagogy, while the 'postmodernists' carefully examine and reformulate it, is one that I would like to turn around, or to 'reverse'. I look now to the second gesture of deconstruction -- displacement -- with aim of demonstrating that the binary opposition 'anti-modern versus postmodern' not only mistakes feminist poststructuralism, but is fundamentally inadequate for accounting for the arguments of these theorists.

DISPLACEMENT

Burbules and Rice accuse the 'antimodernists' of failing to develop a "clear conception of a 'positive freedom' that would identify social conditions in which freer thought and action are possible. Lacking this, 'antimodernism' has not been able to articulate a clear and defensible educational theory" (1991: 399). So far as it goes, this argument is an accurate one, but it ignores the questions which the 'antimodernists' are trying to raise. Following Foucault's warning that "everything is dangerous", feminist poststructuralist pedagogical theorists do their best *not* to construct an alternative (read: 'better') paradigm to critical pedagogy. From their postmodernist perspective, the anxiety to produce, to construct the 'new' (the 'better'; the 'best') is read as a modernist, phallocentric posture we would do well to avoid. Following Derrida, they observe that the institution of such changes functions in the long run only to reverse variables, while retaining the repressive logic of the original hierarchy intact.[5]

Besides which, feminist poststructuralist theorists of pedagogy to a large extent seek the same substantive aims as the 'postmodern' critical pedagogues supported by Burbules and Rice. Indeed, as Kathleen Weiler (1991) points out, Freire's theory of 'conscientization' (1971), which goes far to inform the tenets of critical pedagogy, shares much in common with the consciousness-raising efforts of the Women's LiberationMovement of the 1960s and 1970s that created the 'feminism' in feminist poststructuralism.[6] Undergirding both programs was the awareness that "language offers a range of ways of interpreting our lives which imply different versions of experience, and that it is possible to transform the meaning of experience by bringing a different set of assumptions to bear on it" (Weedon 1987: 85)

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[5] "I do not believe," Derrida notes, " in decisive ruptures, in an unequivocal 'epistemological break,' as it is called today. Breaks are always and fatally, reinscribed in an old cloth that must continually, interminably be undone. This interminability is not accident or contingency, it is essential, systematic, and theoretical" (1981: 24).

Where the feminist poststructuralist perspective differs from Anglo-American feminism and Freirian-styled critical pedagogy is in its suspicion of any authoritative claim to know, for all times, contexts, and subjects, what that set of assumptions *should be*. This "suspicion of the (teacher-) intellectual who both objectifies and speaks for others" (Lather 1991a: 156) reflects the principal foundation of the feminist poststructuralist approach for improving emancipatory pedagogies. In a postmodern era, they argue, we can no longer remain naive about the authority of our best intentions. Calls for 'democratic' participation, dialogical sharing of experiences and self-disclosure, which in the 'view from nowhere' appear to be liberating, may nevertheless seem oppressive from particular subject-positions.

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[6] Weiler (1991) notes that Freire's goals of empowerment and liberation are crucial to critical pedagogy, including a critical pedagogy informed by feminist perspectives. But Freire --she emphasizes *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1971) and I see it as being representative of most of his work -- operates within a Westernist modernist tradition that makes theoretical claims to universalism that simply do not hold up in practice. The students in the Freirian paradigm are assumed to be united in their common experience of oppression: other factors which contribute to the development of a subjective position: race and gender among them, are missing from the analysis. The teacher, even more so, is cast as 'generic', although (s)he is on the side of the oppressed peasants. Freire acknowledges that the teacher approaches the pedagogical scene wielding a considerable amount of power in the form of knowledge and status, but (s)he is obliged to make this power "liberating" for the students, not "antagonistic". Weiler notes that feminist theorists of pedagogy have demonstrated that this scenario does not and cannot account for what actually takes place in classrooms. Students and teachers all come to school as particular embodiments of particular combinations of race, gender, age, class, abilities, etc. An undertaking in the Freirian vein, wherein students, with teachers' guidance, come to name their oppressions will result in a variety of potentially contradictory responses. Freire expects that students will share a common oppression, a common goal to dismantle the sources of that oppression, and will join in a common struggle to do so. But with the element of "commonality" obscured, what are the grounds for collective struggle?

Mimi Orner, for example, applies Foucault's ideas about the panopticon (1979) and the modern 'confessional' mode of self-regulation (1982) to the critical pedagogy classroom and asks that we reevaluate the motivations behind the imposition of 'empowering' practices which encourage students to "publicly realize, even confess, information about their lives and cultures in the presence of authority figures such as teachers" (Orner 1992: 83).[7] Such suspicion inveighs those involved in emancipatory education to look inward, rather than forward, to seek out the gaps and contradictions in our pedagogical ideals and to attend to these in practice, rather than simply constructing a 'better' theory and repeating the same mistakes.

To this end, feminist poststructuralists suggest the strategy of *interruption*. Through continuous critique and interruption, it is possible to deconstruct or 'denaturalize' our concepts, showing the gaps (as Luke does with 'democracy') between their assumed or intended meanings and what in practice they signify. Uncovering the 'suppressed' aspects of emancipatory concepts forces the recognition of how actions undertaken in their name often function to sustain oppressive structures. With this self-awareness, of where and when, as Lather puts it, "our efforts to liberate perpetuate the relations of domination" (1991b: 44), theory becomes practical intervention. Self-reflexivity enables a refusal of the fixed subject-positions assigned both by dominant and 'emancipatory' discourses. In terms of pedagogy, this requires the development of strategies in which, as Davies notes,

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[7] Foucault's perspective on the confessional is worth noting in this context. According to him,

> the confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console and reconcile; a ritual in which the truth is corroborated by the obstacles and resistance it has had to surmount in order to be formulated; and finally, a ritual in which the expression alone, independently of its external consequences, produces intrinsic modifications in the person who articulates it: it exonerates, redeems, and purifies him; it unburdens him of his wrongs, liberates him, and promises him salvation ... the agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks (for it is he who is constrained), but in the one who listens and says nothing; not in the one who knows and answers, but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know (1978: 62).

> students are empowered to refuse sexist and oppressive discourse. What they need is to learn to recognise the constitutive force of spoken and written language, to articulate the multiple and contradictory ways in which they position themselves and are positioned in the various discourses that they encounter, and to make choices about refusing the discursive practices and structures that disempower them or that constitute them in ways they do not want ... *both teachers and students need access not only to textual material in which non-sexist discourses have been developed, but also to resource material that shows them how to go about providing a critique of existing material that has not yet been rewritten* (emphasis added; 1990: 240).

This shifting stance, founded upon difference, is decidely 'other' than the antifoundationalism of Lyotard or Baudrillard (with whom Burbules and Rice seem to equate the 'antimodernists'), as well being different from Giroux's rhetorical efforts to 'pin down' unexamined meanings of 'democracy', 'justice',.and 'equality'. Describing what she calls the feminist pedagogical 'standpoint of difference', Luke observes,

> such a political and ethical standpoint means that we cannot claim one method, one approach, or one pedagogical strategy for student empowerment or for making students name their identity and location. It means that we are not politically and ethically justified to assume positions of authority on 'negative identities': to assume that we have the power to empower or the "language of critique" with which to translate student speech and give it back to them in politically correct terms. Nor can we claim to know what the politically correct end points for liberation are for others" (1992: 48).

The aim of the feminist poststructuralist critique then, is not to replace critical pedagogy with an alternative, or 'oppositional' theory, but by undercutting and interrupting its premises, to work to improve it. Returning to Burbules and Rice, this examination should demonstrate the inadequacy of the antimodernist/postmodernist opposition they propose. In accepting as unproblematic the binary conception of 'either/or' differences, Burbules and Rice view 'postmodernism' as only either a vociferous but untenable attack against modernism or a reinvestment in its ideals. What the perspective on postmodernism and pedagogy argued for by many poststructuralist-influenced feminists (including those cited in Burbules and Rice), opposes, however, is precisely this sort of opposition. By uncoupling the signifiers of modernist discourse from their 'naturalized' Eurocentric and masculinist significations, feminist poststructuralists are working to develop *different* ways of thinking about 'democracy', 'equality', 'dialogue', and the like, which cannot be understood within the discursive arrangement proposed by Burbules and Rice. Thus the oppositional stance against 'positive educational goals' which Burbules and Rice assign to the 'antimodernists' (and which they are then able to argue is unsupportable), is inappropriate.

The reversal and displacement aspects of *différance* are the means, however, not the end, of deconstruction. Deconstructing Burbules and Rice's argument against feminist poststructuralism enables us to see the important similarities between their perspectives, and the opportunities that are present for all to 'dialogue across (their) differences'. It is to this issue that I now turn.

'DIALOGUE ACROSS DIFFERENCES'

In their own reformulation of 'dialogue', Burbules and Rice begin with the assumption that differences exist between participants but, like Habermas (1971), they contend that points of similarity nevertheless remain which provide the grounds for authentic dialogue to occur. Their concept of 'dialogue across difference' contains two important aspects which they describe in the following:

> on the one hand, dialogue aims at the reconciliation of differences or the formation of new common meanings in pursuit of intersubjective understanding ...(but) creating or establishing common meanings is not

> the only possible goal. In this second aspect, dialogue is non-convergent, directed not toward conformity and agreement but toward understanding, tolerance, and respect across difference (1991: 408).

With this understanding of 'dialogue', Burbules and Rice posit a span of at least five possible results of dialogical efforts, ranging from (1) "agreement and consensus, identifying beliefs or values all parties can agree to", to (5) "irreconcilable and incommensurable difference" (1991: 409). Between these two equally unlikely results fall the more realistic potentials for (2) establishment of common meanings in which to discuss differences; for (3) indirect understanding through analogy; or for (4) respect across differences. Burbules and Rice describe a set of 'communicative virtues', on the basis of which dialogue, as they theorize it, could be possible. With the caveat that such "virtues" reflect not end-states but must be attentive to context, these are listed as

> tolerance, patience, respect for differences, a willingness to listen, the inclination to admit that one may be mistaken, the ability to reinterpret or translate one's own concerns in a way that makes them comprehensible to others, the self-imposition of restraint in order that others may "have a turn" to speak, and the disposition to express one's self honestly and sincerely. (1991: 411).

Burbules and Rice note, "this discussion of dialogue across difference assumes a pragmatic, contextual, fallibilistic approach that is in our view a helpful corrective to some of the excesses of antimodern discussions" (1991: 410). Given the emphasis feminist poststructuralism also places on pragmatism, context, and fallibility, this assertion begs the question, 'how?'. In my view, the analysis of dialogue provided by Burbules and Rice (given that they concentrate on the 'middle" potentials of their five possibilities) is an important one and mostly acceptable.[8] It is not logical, however, to deploy it as criticism against feminist poststructuralism.

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[8] Their assumption of rational subjects is a problem from a poststructuralist perspective, however, as I will discuss below.

Burbules and Rice's critique of Iris Marion Young (1990) provides a fortuitous introduction for considering this problem. More important to this discussion than the details of their critique is their rhetorical procedure, which I view as emblematic of their false opposition to feminist poststructuralism. Burbules and Rice accuse Young, in her critique of 'community', of rejecting the possibilities of 'intersubjective understanding' (Burbules and Rice 1991: 402). They do so, however, while ignoring the first half of her essay, in which she defines her particular usage of the term (as participation in what Derrida deems the 'metaphysics of presence'), as well as her concluding acknowledgement that others may use 'community' for other significations, *including* the "openness to unassimilated otherness" (1990: 319) which she recommends in contradistinction to 'community'. Young notes that her concerns rest with the substantive modes of social organization, not with their names:

> in the end it may be a matter of stipulation whether one chooses to call such politics as a play of difference "community" Because most articulations of the ideal of community carry the urge to unity I have criticized, however, I think it is less confusing to use a term other than community rather than to redefine the term...Whatever the label, the concept of social relations that embody openness to unassimilated otherness with justice and appreciation needs to be developed (1990: 320).

This very postmodernist and feminist refusal to posit authoritative definitions is one which Burbules and Rice later call for in their arguments for dialogical sensitivity to difference (1991: 411). In their arguments against the 'antimodernists', however, it is not something which they demonstrate.

In their confrontation with Elizabeth Ellsworth over the issue of 'dialogue', a misunderstanding over terminology can be observed that is very similar to that outlined by Young. In her essay, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering?", Ellsworth rejects "dialogue in its conventional sense (as) impossible in the culture at large because at this historical moment power relations between raced, classed, and gendered students and teachers are unjust" (1989: 316). Ellsworth calls instead for "alternative ground rules for communication" that affirm "'you know me/I know you' while pointing insistently to the interested partialness of those knowings; and constantly (reminds) us that 'you can't know me/I can't know you' while unsettling every definition of knowing arrived at" (1989: 321-22). Ellsworth's different mode of communication is in many respects similar to what Burbules and Rice identify as the 'second' aspect of their reformulation of 'dialogue across differences': "non-convergent, directed not toward conformity and agreement but toward understanding, tolerance, and respect across difference" (1991: 408).[9] Noting the similarity, Burbules and Rice accuse Ellsworth of 'inconsistency' in rejecting dialogue in some places and supporting it in others:

> Ellsworth appears not to recognize that her latter position is a reaffirmation of ... modernist values ... This example shows how antimodern and postmodern positions are often intermingled, and how 'rejected' modern concepts or principles often reappear in a new guise (1991: 403).

All this makes for considerable and unnecessary confusion. In the section above, I demonstrated that in the efforts of the so-called 'antimodernists' to critically re-examine modernist principles and in their calls for reformulation, they in fact are filling the 'postmodernist' bill as Burbules and Rice define it, while those identified *as* 'postmodernists' are not. This observation confirms Burbules and Rice's argument, but it makes it (and their 'antimodern' versus 'postmodern' distinction) a bit beside the point.

What Burbules and Rice 'appear not to recognize' is that Ellsworth, as with Young, is less concerned with labels -- whether 'dialogue' or 'community' (or 'modern' or 'postmodern' for that matter) -- than with the substantive effects of the practices which those labels identify. That Ellsworth supports the development of a form of communication (which Burbules and Rice choose to call 'dialogue') which recognizes and accepts differences does not contradict her rejection of critical pedagogy's conventional version of dialogue, in which "*all voices and their differences become unified* both in their efforts to identify and recall moments of human suffering and in their attempts to overcome conditions that perpetuate such suffering" (emphasis in citation; Giroux 1988a; in Ellsworth 1989: 314). Since Burbules and Rice's conception of dialogue is basically consistent with Ellsworth's, they are picking a fight over terminology which in my view simply isn't worth the effort. Such anxiety over terms seems ironic in a paper in which they argue that, "we need some way of coping with our differences if we are committed to a democratic form of life, a means of making discourse about such matters more inclusive, not less so" (1991: 409). Since the question both for Burbules and Rice *and* for Ellsworth is how to develop the 'ground rules' or 'communicative virtues' necessary for this new form of dialogue, it strikes me that their time might better be spent in collaborative research ('working together across differences') than in battling out semantics in the *Harvard Educational Review*.

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[9] Ellsworth makes the important point, which my reading tends to silence, that the goals of those marginalized and oppressed by dominant discourses may often not be a sharing of differences in an environment of 'tolerance', but rather, as bell hooks notes, "a 'talking back', a 'defiant speech'" (hooks 1989: 98; in Ellsworth 1989: 310)

DIFFERENT SUBJECTS

> *Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of the relationships and conditions in which these individuals stand to one another* -- Karl Marx, 1858.

The second accusation made by Burbules and Rice is more serious. Here they argue that the 'antimodern' theorists suffer from an exaggerated conception of intersubjective difference which leads them to conclude that communicative dialogue of any form is impossible and undesirable. The feminist debate with poststructuralism centers around a similar issue. If difference cancels out altogether the legitimacy of subject-based politics, there is little left for resistance movements to do.[10] Unlike macho philosophy, the feminist agenda to bring about educational and social change *can't* settle for incommensurability, and doesn't. The literature contains numerous proposals for different forms of strategic dialogical communication arising out of the mutual experience of 'not knowing' and of 'being unknown'. Luke, following Haraway, calls for the development of 'nodal points of affinity' (1992: 47), while Ellsworth argues for 'coalition-building' and 'alliances' (1991: 317-318), and Lather recommends methods of intertextuality (1991b: 123). Even Orner's (1992) Kristevan-styled analysis of student voice, which I read as one of the most radical moments in the literature, does not hold out such a nihilistic view of communication as Burbules and Rice describe. The feminist poststructuralist "celebration of difference" (Burbules and Rice 1991: 396), then, should be read not as a cynical pronouncement of a "society of Babel" (1991: 408), but rather as a positive political warning against efforts to totalize. 'Difference' in this sense, is not "elevated to the primary position in [the 'antimodernist'] analysis of social and political relations" (1991: 403), as Burbules and Rice would have it, but on the contrary forms its foundational principle, what Butler calls the "ungrounded ground of feminist theory" (1992: 16).

The misunderstanding derives from Burbules and Rice's commitment to the ideal of the fully rational subject. Despite their discussion of postmodernism and their reformulated version of 'dialogue' which accounts for 'differences', this commitment is revealed in two subtle but significant remarks. First, to add theoretical ballast to their defence of dialogue, Burbules and Rice note that, "as Paulo Freire, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jurgen Habermas, and numerous others have argued, dialogue can proceed in a manner that aims toward careful, respectful, non-dominating agreement" (1991: 408). Each of these (modernist, male) theorists make this claim on the assumption that some degree of lifeworld understanding is shared among rational individuals. Burbules and Rice hold a similar view, as demonstrated in the second observation that, "no communication process is perfect -- intersubjective understanding, *even among members who occupy the same category of difference* is never complete" (emphasis added, 1991: 409). What is left untheorized here is the question of difference within subjects themselves. Feminists poststructuralists agree that intersubjective understanding is 'never complete' because members who occupy 'the same category of difference' *always differ in others* : subjects are not unified within themselves. As Burbules and Rice themselves note at the start of their article, "from the standpoint of the subjective construction of identity, such factors cannot be regarded separately: a person is, for example, Black, female, and poor" (1991: 394). The 'same category of difference', as feminists have realized with the category of 'woman', should not be assumed to possess significant meaning within itself, and efforts to organize or even to dialogue on the basis of such categories usually fall prey to essentialism.[11]

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[10] See my Chapter Two for a discussion of this problem.

For feminist poststructuralists, the question becomes one of *intra*-subjective difference as much as 'intersubjective'. If the subject is constructed and not unified this does not mean the cancellation of agency or of the legitimacy or desirability of active communication. It does signal the need for precaution, however, when attempting to organize dialogical encounters or when evaluating their results. I would like to try to clarify this through a quick reading of Orner's comments. Combining insights from discourse analysis, psychoanalysis and semiotics, Orner argues that authentic[12] intersubjective understanding is impossible, not (as Burbules and Rice assume) on account of the differences between subjects, but because of the differences that exist *within* them. As Young notes,

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[11] I discuss this problem in greater detail in Chapter Two. Also see Note 22 in Chapter Three.

[12] By 'authentic' I mean genuine self-disclosure in which each participant reveals the "Truth" of her/his knowledge, opinions and desires.

> if each subject escapes its own comprehension and for that reason cannot fully express to another its needs and desires, then necessarily each subject also escapes sympathetic comprehension by others. I cannot understand another as he or she understand himself or herself because he or she does not completely understand himself or herself (1990: 311).

Influenced by Foucault's analytics of power/knowledge in discourse, Orner notes that what is legitimate for a subject to think and to say -- or not to say: she is emphatic on the need for a reconsideration of the signification of student silence[13] -- in a dialogical situation depends on the specific position he or she occupies in the power nexus of that context. Binaristic roles -- whether one occupies the position of, for example, student or teacher, child or parent, patient or doctor, employee or employer, immigrant or citizen -- provide only the outline of this position, which other variables including but not limited to 'gender', 'race', 'class', 'age', 'sexuality', 'intelligence', etc., fill in.[14] Under different contextual circumstances, therefore, different assumptions become legitimate, and our 'voices' change. Orner's psychoanalytic point is to illustrate that *even if we could* shirk the control of power for a moment (the aim of emancipatory discourses which Foucault argues is impossible), so that anything at all would be legitimate to say, we would still be unable to express precisely what we mean. The subject is not only fragmented into a multiplicity of identity-variables such as those noted above, but is divided between conscious knowledge and unconscious desires.[15] Lastly, with regard to semiotics, Orner observes that our use of language invariably invokes traces of past usage. The fact that we think and articulate in a language that precedes us rules out the possibility of controlling the meaning of our expressions. The perspective we articulate at any given moment, then, is the effect of a vast number of often contradictory impulses responding to a specific set of power relations and filtered through a limited set of terms which are 'always already' imbued with meaning. Thus, as Orner notes, "the voicing of our differences ought not to be received as if we are speaking some solemn Truth about our lives" (1992: 86).

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[13] Orner notes,

> there are times when it is not safe for students to speak: when one student's socially constructed body language threatens another; when the teacher is not perceived as an ally. It is not adequate to write off student silence in these instances as simply a case of internalized oppression. Nor can we simply label these silences resistance or false consciousness. There may be compelling conscious and unconscious reasons for not speaking - or for speaking, perhaps more loudly, with silence (1992: 81).

[14] See my Chapter Two and Butler (1990: 143) on the implications of what she terms this 'embarrassed etc.'.

What these observations indicate for education is that we should not presume, out of even the most frank dialogue and the most generous respect for differences, to come to authoritative conclusions about apparent intersubjective differences and commonalities/ understandings. Orner is suspicious of Anglo-American feminist and critical pedagogical theories which posit singular, rational, but falsely-conscious student subjects whose 'voices' are open to transformation by the enlightened teacher-intellectual (who, in Luke's (1992: 48) terms, possesses a " 'language of critique' with which to translate student speech and give it back to them in politically correct terms"). Orner observes,

> we are to believe that critical and feminist teachers have already dealt conclusively with their own inscription and involvement in oppressive power dynamics. Given the binarism and unifed subjectivity which underlies much 'liberatory' education, educators see themselves as 'empowerers' - not as 'oppressors'. Anglo-American feminist and critical pedagogues allegedly understand and never contribute to the racism, ethnocentrism, classism, sexism, heterosexism and so on that their students experience. In the final instance, it is the critical or feminist pedagogue who determines if and when students have succeeded in valuing their own language, background, and personalities. These paternalistic tendencies in critical and Anglo-American feminist education ultimately replicate racist, classist and sexist forms for students. Educators stand above their students, and guide them in their struggle for personal empowerment and voice. The only call for

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[15] Hence the poststructuralist distaste for the term 'individual'.

> change is on the part of the students. The only people who get 'worked over' are the students. The only call is for student voice. Critical and feminist teachers, we are to assume, have already found and articulated theirs (1992: 87).

From Orner's perspective, critical pedagogues need to examine the power relations within their classrooms which organize 'who speaks' and 'what gets said' before assuming, as Burbules and Rice claim, that "the occasional experience of radical incommensurability should not obscure the much more important point that, despite enormous diversity, our ways of thinking and speaking about our world also exhibit striking commonalities" (1991: 408). As Susan Bordo explains it, "we always 'see' from points of view that are invested with our social, political and personal interests, inescapably 'centric' in one way or another, even in the desire to do justice to heterogeneity" (1989: 140).

In the literature, feminist poststructuralist critiques of liberatory pronouncements about voice, identity, and dialogue in the classroom, are invariably grounded in narratives about the author's own classroom experiences. Moreover, these experiences reflect situations in which the curriculum has been directed toward bringing subjective differences to light. Among these, Davies' examination of gender identification in preschool children (1990), the experience of undergraduate women's studies classrooms as discussed by Lather (1991b) and Orner (1992), and Ellsworth's reading of her graduate seminar on antiracism (1989) are only a few examples. What these experiential narratives suggest is that ideals of critical pedagogical may be easier to achieve -- whether or not they are desirable is another issue -- in theoretical tracts than in practice, and moreover, in situations where differences are ignored rather than emphasized as part of a postmodern, 'consciousness-raising' curriculum. For these authors, 'emancipatory' pedagogical theory breaks down when it has to confront, as Marx says, 'real, living, individuals' who understand the world through the subject-positions they occupy, rather than rationalist philosophical tenets. As Ellsworth argues,

> as long as the literature on critical pedagogy fails to come to grips with issues of trust, risk, and the operations of fear and desire around such issues of identity and politics in the classroom, their rationalistic tools will continue to fail to loosen deep seated, self-interested investments in unjust relations of, for example, gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation (1989: 314).

The feminist poststructuralist critique of critical pedagogy, then, seems to offer 'reality checks' to correct the ungrounded theoretical excesses or what Ellsworth calls the "contortions of logic and rhetoric" (1989: 312) that characterize much of the critical pedagogy literature.

CONCLUSION: INTERRUPTING THE CONVERSATION

Foucault observed that discourses create the objects of which they speak. In "Dialogue Across Differences", Burbules and Rice create the category of 'antimodernism' and are successful in refuting it. What they do not do, however, is refute the arguments of those theorists whom they position within this category. Ellsworth, Davies, Lather, Young, and others like them, are simply not 'antimodern' as it is defined by the authors. Their deconstructive arguments are ones which cannot be captured within a strictly oppositional framework.

In considering the accusations raised against the feminist poststructuralist critique of critical pedagogy, at least three questions come to mind. First, why it is that explicitly feminist, anti-racist (in the case of Ellsworth) theorists are mistaken as representatives of a relativistic perspective that "permits every form of life on principle" (Bauman, cited in Burbules and Rice 1991: 396)? It should seem clear enough in reading their texts that what these theorists are calling for is not anarchic relativism, but methods of teaching against oppression which do not perpetuate it elsewhere. I would also ask why those in favour of developing emancipatory pedagogies rebuke the contributions of 'other' theorists who are working toward a similar goal. When did critical pedagogy become such a sacred cow? In her analysis of the competing strains of radical pedagogy, Gore suggests that the different discourses of radical pedagogy have kept close guard of their boundaries so as "to avoid competition and continue their work with minimal immanent critique" (1993: 39). Feminist poststructuralist theorists of pedagogy appear to have transgressed some exceedingly sensitive boundaries. Before accusing feminist poststructuralism of antagonism toward positive educational goals, defenders of 'emancipatory' education would do well to reconsider their own subjective investments in the ('radical') dominant discourse. Luke observes,

> the early 1990s is not the time for those educationists committed to critical social theory and the remaking of practice to fragment over theoretical minutiae. There is a need ... to organize our theoretical strategy and practical tactics in a counter-offensive front. However, that front can no longer exclude ..., either by failure to critique masculinist theoretical narratives or by an 'add-on' approach to matters of practice (1992: 29).

What 'new'/'different' 'counter-offensive' models of liberatory education might look like, and how they could be articulated in classrooms with the least degree of imposition becomes the fundamental dilemma postmodernism presents to critical education. As Bakhtin has shown us, whenever we speak we call into play traces of the ways in which those words have been used before. Derrida's argument of phallogocentrism is more extreme, holding that the structure of language itself follows a logic of exclusion, and that any linguistically-made statement participates in this exclusionary practice. His point, while interesting enough from a philosophical viewpoint, is not especially useful for those who cannot afford the luxury of suffering from poststructuralist paralysis. The question remains, however, how are we to create more egalitarian institutions when the only discourse we have holds up an unequal concept of equality?

Equipped with the most useful insights from poststructuralist philosophy, and postmodern identity politics, the feminist poststructuralist contribution to critical pedagogy seems best suited to provide answers -- or non-answers -- to this question. The strategy of denaturalization through reflexive, practice-oriented, contextualized, self-interruption threatens some, inspires others. In any event, it is something to be dealt with seriously, not dismissed. With this in mind I would like to close with Maxine Greene's foreward comments in an anthology of these writings:

> [this work represents] a feminist pedagogy in the making -- a pedagogy actually defined by activist women teachers, forged out of the palpitant stuff of their own classroom practice and the material of their own embodied lives. [Their work] is a sign of something happening, something that has never happened in this manner before (1992: xi).

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